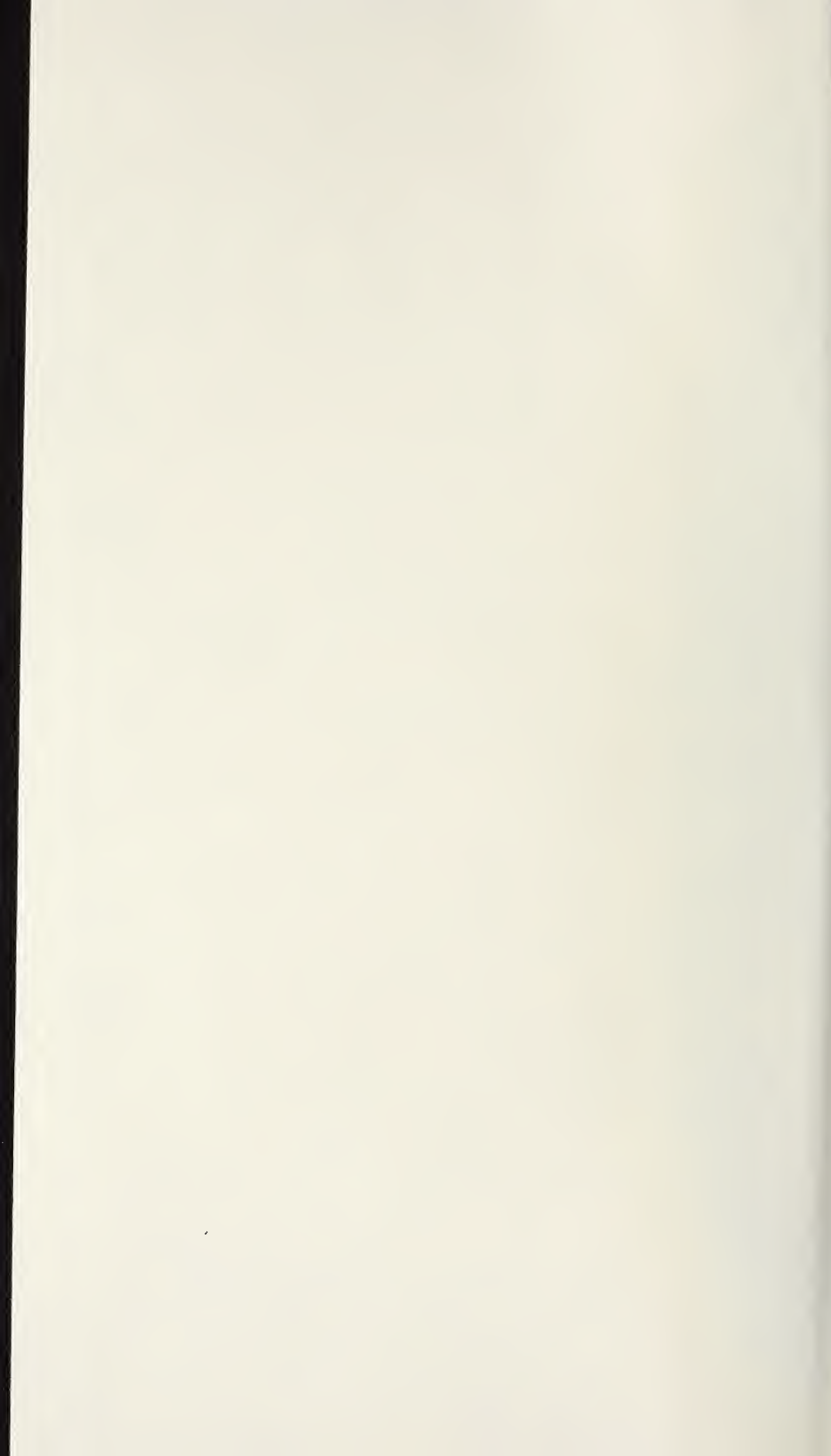


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ANSWER

TO

DR. WOODS' REPLY.

IN A

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19

SECOND SERIES OF LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO

TRINITARIANS AND CALVINISTS.

BY HENRY [✓]WARE, D. D.

Hollis Professor of Divinity in the University at Cambridge.

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LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

Occasion of the present publication. State of the controversy. Manner of conducting it. Charge of inconsistency answered. Agreement between some orthodox and infidel writers. Another charge of inconsistency answered. Statement of the question at issue on the subject of depravity corrected.

WHEN I published, nearly two years ago, "Letters addressed to Trinitarians and Calvinists," it was my hope not to be called upon to pursue any further the discussions, in which they were employed. But the Reply of Dr. Woods to those Letters, which is now before the public, has rendered it proper for me, I think, to offer some further thoughts on the several subjects of discussion, and remarks on his manner of treating them. I shall accordingly address to you a few additional Letters, in which I hope to be able to satisfy you, that the state of the controversy is not changed, and that the great points at issue between us remain, as they stood before. My opponent had doubtless good reason to felicitate himself as he does, (p. 6) "on the benefit he could derive from the frankness," (he might have added, perhaps, want of controversial skill and caution) of the person, with whom he was contending. Though I

trust to be able to show, that the benefit is to himself only, as an accomplished disputant, and not, as he flatters himself, to the cause he maintains. That will be found to derive less advantage from the circumstance, than he seems to promise himself.

I think it necessary, in the outset, to remind you of the state of the controversy, because you are otherwise in danger of losing sight of the points at issue, and of having your attention directed to subordinate circumstances, which are so apt, in the course of discussion, to be allowed to take their place. For this purpose I must call your attention to the origin and progress of the discussion.

The occasion, in which it originated, was a Discourse delivered by Dr. Channing at the ordination of the Rev. Mr. Sparks at Baltimore, in May 1819. A part of that Discourse, in which the doctrines of Calvinism were spoken of, was attacked by Dr. Woods, who complained that the doctrines referred to were misrepresented, professing at the same time to give a correct statement of them, as they are now held in this country by those, who assume for their system the title of Orthodoxy; and undertaking also to defend them, as constituting the true system of christianity, agreeing with our experience, and clearly taught by Revelation.

The important points of doctrine, you will recollect, which he maintained in a series of Letters addressed to Unitarians, were, *The total depravity of human nature, particular personal election, atonement by the death of Christ, and the necessity of*

special divine influence in producing holiness. Those Letters were published in the spring of 1820. In the month of August of the same year, the writer of these pages attempted an answer to them in Letters addressed to Trinitarians and Calvinists. In those letters he endeavoured to show, that the doctrines of orthodoxy, as stated by Dr. Woods, were not taught in the bible, were not supported by experience, and could not be reconciled with the moral character of God. The writer, at the same time, took occasion to state distinctly, his own particular views upon each of the several subjects in controversy.

In the book which furnishes my apology for addressing you once more in these Letters, Dr. Woods has appeared again in defence of the doctrines maintained in his former publication, and in reply to the objections, which I had urged against them. With what degree of success, you will be able to judge, after having read what he has written, and what I have now to allege in answer.

Nothing will be found, I am persuaded, which, upon a fair examination, will be thought to affect the evidence of any one of the main articles in the scheme of scriptural divinity, which I endeavoured to support in my Letters. The reader, who gives himself the trouble to make the necessary comparison of passages referred to, will perceive, without the aid of these pages, that although Dr. Woods has been able to fasten some apparent inconsistencies and absurdities, and perhaps you will think after all that can be said, some real ones upon his antagonist; they

are yet of such a nature, as not to affect at all the truth of the points at issue, but only the conclusiveness of my reasoning upon them, or still more frequently, the propriety of some term or phrase which I have employed. They serve to show, not the weakness of the cause, but that its strength has not been fully displayed; not that the Unitarian doctrines are incapable of a fair support, but that the best support has not been given them, of which they are capable.

It accordingly makes a part of my present design to show, that whatever advantage Dr. Woods may seem to have obtained in detecting apparent inconsistencies in the explanation and defence of the Unitarian doctrines, the evidence of the doctrines is not affected.

But I hope also to do more than this. I hope to satisfy you, and I think I shall be able to do it, that the inconsistencies so ingeniously detected and so faithfully displayed, are, in general, if not in every instance, apparent only; and that they will disappear upon a fair presentation of the true meaning of the passages, from a comparison of which they were drawn.

I mean not by this to intimate any unfair or dishonorable intentions in Dr. Woods. I will not allow myself to believe him capable of any intentional argumentative unfairness. I only mean, that in the discussion of religious or moral subjects for popular use, one can hardly employ words with such philosophical exactness, and so constantly guard against objection, that metaphysical subtilty

shall not be able to bring together expressions, which seem to be irreconcilable with each other. And there is certainly, at first view, something extremely imposing, and apt to make a strong impression, in an array of inconsistencies and contradictions, spread before one in strong relief and in broad characters. Our first thought is, that little reliance is to be placed on a writer, who so exposes himself. Yet, in reality, there is nothing, perhaps, upon which we have less reason to depend. For suppose, all that can be asked, the inconsistency to be as great in reality, as it seems to be ; what does it prove ?—not that the cause is a bad one, but only that it is unskilfully or carelessly managed ;—not that the doctrine is false, but that the evidence of its truth has been less successfully stated than it might have been. But we are not usually required to admit so much as this. Such is the imperfection of language, and such the real difficulty of some subjects of speculation, that, as I have before observed, it is scarcely possible for words to be used with such accuracy and precision, and with such care, that a vigilant and acute antagonist shall not be able to discover inconsistencies, which may be so presented, as to seem of considerable importance. I could illustrate this by a hundred instances taken from the sacred writers, where we are constantly called to reconcile apparent contradictions ; and where, by the fairest modes of interpretation, we are able to do it with entire satisfaction, without prejudice either to the writer or the doctrine. It would have been no difficult task to

discover apparent inconsistencies in the book, which I had occasion to notice in my former Letters. But had I pursued that course, the author would doubtless have charged me, and I know not how I could have repelled the charge, with a disposition to cavil, rather than reason; and would probably have been able to show, that a little more patient and impartial attention to the subject, or a little more argumentative fairness, would have presented to me a meaning, that implied no absurdity, and was chargeable with no contradiction.

With these preliminary remarks, I now invite your attention to the several charges of inconsistency, to which, in the book before me, I am represented to have exposed myself, in my statements of the Unitarian doctrine, and reasonings respecting it.

The first that I shall notice is contained in the passage in pp. 13 to 17 inclusive, and refers to p. 26 in the Letters to Trinitarians and Calvinists, compared with pp. 20, 31 and 41, of the same.* Upon looking at these several passages with a reference to the alleged inconsistency, my first thought was, that I might safely leave the subject without any explanatory remarks, only requesting you to read the whole of the several passages attentively; assured that you could not fail to perceive, that it only offers a remarkable instance of an appearance of inconsistency produced by a dexterous juxtaposition of separate passages, where a careful examination of the subject only is needed to show, that no real inconsistency exists.

* I refer always to the pages of the octavo edition of the Letters.

But lest there should be any readers, who may not have the patience to recur to passages and their connexion, and make the requisite examination, or may not have the means of doing it, or may be insensible of the need of doing it, not aware how liable a fair and honourable disputant, of peculiar talents, turn of mind, and habits of speculation may be to impose upon himself and thus upon his reader by his own ingenuity; it seems necessary for me to take the labour upon myself by showing where the fallacy lies in the present case, and in several others which follow.

The inconsistency with which I am charged (Dr. Woods' Reply, p. 16) amounts to this, and this only, though it is again and again brought to view, and placed in different points of light, viz. That while in the formal statement of the doctrine, which I meant to maintain respecting the natural state of man, I assert, *that man is by nature free from all moral corruption, as well as destitute of positive holiness, by nature no more inclined to sin than to virtue, and equally capable in the ordinary use of his faculties, and with the common assistance afforded him, of either*; yet, in discussing the subject, I several times say what implies, *that by their natural birth men become moral, have a moral disposition or character, which is good or holy in such a sense, as to entitle them to the Saviour's complacency, and make them heirs of his kingdom.*

Now, by reading the whole passage and applying the principles of interpretation, which we

usually apply, when we discover an apparent contradiction between two sentences of a writer of any character for common sense and consistency ; you will be satisfied, that had my ingenious friend as faithfully taxed his ingenuity to ascertain the real meaning of the writer in the passage before him, as he has done to detect and present to view an alleged inconsistency, he would have saved me, himself, and the reader some waste of labour and time. For, notwithstanding what is so repeatedly insinuated, that he was at a loss what my real opinion was, and what was the position, that I meant to maintain, he will not—he cannot deny, that in the direct statement of my opinion on the subject, there is no ambiguity, no room for any reader to be at a loss, what is the precise position, which I meant to maintain. It is, as I have before stated, *That man is by nature, that is, as he is born into the world, equally free from sin and destitute of holiness, no more inclined to vice than to virtue, and equally capable, in the ordinary use of his faculties, and with the common assistance afforded him, of either.* And this position, you will recollect, is maintained in opposition to the doctrine of orthodoxy on the same subject, which is, “ *That man is by nature, that is, as he is born into the world, totally depraved, inclined only to evil, and wholly incapable of any good inclination or motion, until such inclination or motion is produced by an irresistible act of the spirit of God.*”

Now, in support of my own position, and in opposition to that of orthodoxy, among other arguments, I took occasion to apply that, which is drawn

from the earliest indications of character in children. But in speaking of the innocence, gentleness, kindness, and love of truth in children, am I to be charged with asserting or implying, that *they are holy by nature*, in contradiction to the express assertion at the head of the argument? Consider only what the nature of the argument required. Dr. Woods' position is, *that human beings come into existence totally depraved, inclined only to evil*. If this be the truth, the earliest indications of character in children ought to be evil only, unmingled wickedness, sin without alloy. My position, on the other hand, is, *that human beings come into existence innocent, and without any greater bias to sin than to holiness; not inclined to holiness only, nor did I say to holiness more than to sin*. If this be the truth, the earliest indications of character will be of a mixed nature; and at an early period, as soon indeed as the child becomes capable of moral action, we shall be likely to find in its dispositions and in its character as much of that which is good, as of that which is evil. This, I endeavoured to show, is in fact the case, and that our doctrine is fully confirmed by experience. I confined myself, indeed, chiefly to the mention of amiable traits and virtuous tendencies; because those of an opposite nature, not being questioned by the orthodox, it was unnecessary to mention.

Now, as it was the object of my argument to show, that whatever early indications there are of bad dispositions or bad tendencies, they are to be attributed to other causes, and furnish no proof of

original native depravity; when I had occasion to speak of good dispositions, and good tendencies, common courtesy, one would have thought, should have saved me from the charge of asserting or implying, original native holiness, even although it had not been, as it had, expressly disclaimed. My real meaning must have been perfectly obvious to every reader. It was what the argument required, viz. that the early indications of what is good in children proves, not that they are holy by nature, but only, that they are *not totally depraved*, since, if they were, none of those indications could have existed. With this explanation in your mind, read the passage, which I have referred to, and you will perceive, that all appearance of inconsistency has vanished.

But I have not yet done with the passage. In my former publication, I had mentioned as proofs, that the nature of man is not totally depraved, *that innocence, simplicity, and purity are characteristics of early life; that veracity, kindness, good will, flow from the natural feelings, and that the infant mind early discovers affection, attachment, gratitude toward those from whom it receives kindness.* The correctness of this statement of the characteristics of early life, far from being denied by Dr. Woods, is expressly admitted. "These," he says, after quoting them, "are charming names, and *I am sensible that charming qualities of human nature are denoted by them.*" But are innocence, purity, veracity, kindness, gratitude and good will, qualities that denote a nature totally depraved, inclined only to evil? What then must be the qualities, that

shall denote a nature free from depravity? Will you say, the opposite qualities, impurity, deceit, unkindness, ingratitude, ill-will? I had not asserted, nor was it implied in any thing I did assert, that either or all of these were sufficient *alone* to constitute a holy man, or, that nothing more than these was required; but I did suppose that they made a part, and an important part of that character, which constitutes conformity to the moral law, and renders him to whom it belongs holy, and acceptable to God.

Nor did I think of comparing these qualities, as Dr. Woods has done, (p. 13) with "beauty of complexion and features, sprightliness of temper, and activity of limbs." I knew, indeed, that Hume, Godwin, and others, who hold some philosophical opinions in common with the orthodox, do, on the ground of those opinions and as their legitimate consequence, confound together physical and moral qualities, and assert, that there is as much good desert in a well formed body, as in a well regulated mind or heart; and upon the same principle, that there is no more guilt or blame-worthiness in the murderer, than in the instrument with which he perpetrates the bloody deed. But I had always supposed, that when the Orthodox were charged with these opinions, as the legitimate tendency of their doctrine of human nature, and necessarily connected with it, they would deny the charge, and consider it as a slanderous misrepresentation. And I am at once surprised and sorry to meet with expressions in the book before me, which expose the author to the charge in a manner, which I do not perceive how

he is to repel. For if there is no more good desert in innocence, veracity, gratitude and kindness, than in personal beauty, there can be no more guilt in falsehood, ingratitude, or cruelty, than in personal deformity; and he who asserts this need not hesitate to go the length of Godwin,—that the murderer is no more to be blamed than the dagger.

A charge of inconsistency of a similar nature occurs, (p. 35) which, by turning to the passage in my Letters, to which it refers, you will perceive has as little foundation as the other.

In proof of the general position, which I have before repeated, viz. *that mankind come into the world innocent and pure, objects of the complacency of the Creator, and no more inclined by nature to sin than to holiness; no more disposed to hate and disobey, than to love and obey their Maker*, I had urged the manner in which little children are spoken of by our Saviour and by St. Paul. *Suffer little children to come unto me—for of such is the kingdom of God. Except ye be converted and become as little children &c.* I asked, if they were depraved, *destitute of holiness*, averse from all good, inclined to evil only, enemies of God, subjects of his wrath, justly liable to all punishments, could our Saviour declare respecting them, *of such is the kingdom of God?* In this sentence the acute and vigilant eye of Dr. Woods has fixed itself on the unlucky phrase *destitute of holiness*, as implying a contradiction to what I had elsewhere said, and what my scheme every where implies, *that men do not possess by birth that character*

of personal holiness, and positive virtue, which is necessary to their being christians &c.

Now I am ready to admit, if you will insist in contradiction to the whole tenor of this passage, in which it stands, and to the main position, which I had so often repeated, and stated so explicitly, that I must have used the word *holiness* here in its technical sense, the charge of inconsistency will lie against me. And what is the consequence? Only this, that I have used a phrase, which expresses a meaning, that I did not intend to express, and which every reader, not excepting Dr. Woods himself, perceives that I did not intend. In the sense, therefore, whether proper or not, in which it was evidently used, no contradiction or inconsistency is implied.

So far as the alleged contradiction consists in the representation of little children as *belonging to the kingdom of God*, I shall not be held answerable for the propriety of the terms, as I only use the words, that were used by our Saviour. Nor do I perceive what is gained or lost by Dr. Woods in adopting the interpretation of Rosenmuller, and understanding the text to mean, not that *children belong to the kingdom of God*, but that members of Christ's kingdom must be *like little children*. For upon this interpretation, equally with the other, little children are supposed to have some qualites, which are essential to those, who are to become christians. They have then some good qualities—are not totally depraved—are not inclined only to evil.

Dr. Woods, however, endeavours to prove, that our Saviour's recommendation of children as objects of imitation to his disciples does not imply (p. 37) "that children possess any moral excellence or goodness, like that excellence or goodness of christians, which is meant to be set forth by the comparison;" because christians are in a similar manner, for the purpose of illustration, likened to sheep, lambs, doves; and it is asked, "do sheep, lambs, and doves possess moral excellence?" They are compared also, it is said, "to salt, light, and the branches of a vine." But to the whole reasoning and appeal in this passage, specious as it seems at first view, a single consideration may be opposed, which will suffice to show, that it has no weight. It is this, that every such illustration by a comparison is to be interpreted according to the nature of the subject in discussion and of the object of comparison. When christians are compared to a vine &c. we are very certain, that it cannot refer to any intellectual or moral quality in the vine, because a vine is in its nature incapable of such a quality; but are we hence to infer, that there is no reference to moral qualities, when a child is the subject of comparison, who *is* capable of such qualities? Some degree of presumption at least, that moral qualities were referred to, one would think was to be drawn from the very circumstance, that a subject was made choice of for the illustration, which was capable of moral qualities. And we should be confirmed in the opinion, that it certainly was so, if, as in the present case, the whole transaction clearly

indicated, that moral, and only moral qualities were in the mind of the speaker. Dr. Woods, however, is of a different opinion. He thinks they are not moral, but natural qualities. And he says, (p. 40) "The plain truth is, that the amiable natural qualities, which distinguish little children, are made use of to illustrate the amiable moral qualities, which ought to belong to christians." You will here doubtless wish with me to learn, what are the names of those *moral qualities* of christians, which are said to resemble, and are represented by the *natural qualities* of children. The amiable natural qualities, which, it is not denied, belong to children, are innocence, purity, veracity, kindness, gratitude, &c. You will wish to know what are the *amiable moral* qualities of christians, which these represent, and whether they are known by other names than innocence, purity, veracity, &c. You will think it also a singular concession in one, who professes to maintain the doctrine of total native depravity, that the qualities above mentioned are the natural qualities of children; that beings by nature destitute of all good, and inclined only to evil, are yet by nature kind, grateful, pure, innocent, and true; i. e. have the very qualities which, in christians, are moral qualities.

It is important for me here to call your attention to an incorrectness in Dr. Woods' statement of the question at issue on the subject of depravity; because it is a circumstance, by which the reasoning in this and the following chapters is materially affected. He says, (p. 13) "The real question is,

whether holy love to God and man is the first moral affection, which human beings generally exercise, after they become moral agents, and are expressly informed what God requires of them." Now this is so far from being the real question, that it has made no part of the question between us. It has neither been asserted nor denied ; nor do I know, that the affirmative is maintained by any one. The real question at issue is a different one. It is not, whether the first moral affection be *generally holy*, but whether it be *always unholy* ; not whether holy love to God and men be the *invariable* or *general* characteristic of our first affections ; but whether our first affections and inclinations *be evil*, and *evil only*. You perceive the wide difference of these questions. With the former I have no concern. The latter was opposed in my former letters, as being supported neither by scripture nor experience ; and it is the only point to which Dr. Woods' defence ought now to have been directed. Why he has chosen to direct it to another point, about which there has been no controversy, he will doubtless be able to say. It is sometimes the policy of inferior combatants to carry the war into a quarter, where there is no opposition. But such a motive and design cannot be attributed in the present case.

LETTER II.

Traits of early character not consistent with depravity. Appeal to experience by the orthodox—defective—partial.

I HAVE but few remarks to make on what I find in the second chapter of the book before me. One, however, that occurs upon reading the first sentence, is of some importance, and may be applied to several other passages. It is asserted, that it had been shown in the preceding chapter, “That those amiable qualities, which are really characteristic of early life, and which had been mentioned as indications of moral purity, are in fact of such a nature, that they may consist with depravity, and so cannot afford any argument at all against the common orthodox doctrine.” The fallacy contained in this sentence, arising partly from the loose and equivocal use of the term *depravity*, and partly from a degree of uncertainty as to what is meant by *the common orthodox doctrine*, I apprehend is not immediately perceived by readers generally.

Now what Dr. Woods has shown is in fact only this, that the amiable qualities, admitted to be characteristic of early life, are not inconsistent with the existence of qualities of an opposite nature at an equally early period. This, Unitarians have not denied. It is expressly admitted in all my reasoning upon the subject. But if this is the sense in which he uses the word *depravity* in this place, and nothing more is meant; it has no relation to the orthodox doctrine of depravity. That doctrine relates not to the acquired *character* of children, but to their

nature, and expresses not what they actually are by practice, but what they are supposed to be, as they come into being previous to practice. Orthodox depravity is “an *innate* moral depravity, all without exception being by nature unlike and opposed to God, and all their affections and actions wholly wrong, adverse to the character and glory of God.” But has Dr. Woods shown or attempted to show, that the amiable qualities really characteristic of early life are consistent with depravity in this sense? Has he shown that innocence, purity, veracity, kind affections are consistent with a *nature inclined only to evil*, and *with affections and actions wholly wrong*?

But an appeal is made to the experience of parents and christian ministers, as to the character and disposition of young children; and it is asked (p. 43) “whether, at two or three years old, they show a heart to love God supremely. Or if then supposed not capable of having correct knowledge of God and their duty, whether at four, five, six, or ten they generally show a disposition to love and worship God, or signs of cheerful, willing obedience.” It were sufficient to reply here, that this statement presents a wrong view of the question at issue, which is not whether we are by nature wholly or even prevailingly disposed to good; but whether, as the orthodox doctrine of depravity teaches, we are *wholly inclined to evil*, and all our affections and actions by nature wrong, and opposed to God and his law. It is enough, therefore, if I can prove, not that children are naturally disposed to love God supremely, but that *they do not hate him supremely*;

or that there is not satisfactory evidence that they do so hate him ; or even that they are not more disposed by nature to hate, than to love God, to disobey, than to obey his laws. All, therefore, that is said in this chapter of the character of children, may be admitted without prejudice to the argument. All the indications of depravity, which are there arrayed together, prove only what Unitarians have as little disposition to deny as the orthodox. I mean, that children have an animal as well as an intellectual nature ; passions and appetites to allure, mislead, and endanger virtue as well, as reason and conscience to guide and restrain ; a sensual as well as a moral constitution, by which they are early exposed to temptation, surrounded with dangers, and liable to fall into sin. But we affirm, that these appetites, passions, and natural affections are not in themselves sinful. They do not constitute him a sinner in whom they exist. They lead not to sin only, but are the source and the elements of our virtues as well as our vices. They are not extinguished in the best of men.

But there is further a defect in the appeal to experience, which renders entirely inconclusive any arguments that are drawn from it. A part only of her report on the subject has been stated, and I must now be allowed to supply the omission, and fill up the report, by stating what has been withheld. The experience then of every parent and instructor (p. 44) “ who labours in earnest to teach children the things of religion, and to induce them to keep the divine commands, undoubtedly does find some

of their inclinations mighty obstacles to his success." But he is a most unfortunate parent, who has not also found in his children something to facilitate his success ; some docility, reasonableness, and tenderness of conscience. If he has represented God to them, as he appears in his works, and is revealed in his word, in all the moral beauty and grandeur of his character, kind and merciful as well as holy and just ; the benefactor and friend, as well as the righteous judge of men ; he has at least as often found them ready to love and obey, as to hate and disobey the Author of their being.

But any conclusions drawn from what can be said on either side, as to the natural disposition to love God, will be to little purpose, for want of a conception or idea of God, upon which the argument is to proceed, that is common to us both ; since it is not the word God, but the idea annexed to that word, that is the subject of consideration. By the Unitarian it will be regarded as no proof of native depravity, if, instead of admiring and loving, the child is shocked at the character and attributes of God, as they would be presented to its mind in a statement of the Calvinistic doctrine. On the other hand, by the Calvinist, it will be regarded as no proof of a right disposition and good moral tendency, though the child should approve and love God as soon as it is made acquainted with his character, as he is represented by the Unitarian doctrine. The reason in each case is obvious. The great question at issue between us is, whether *this* or *that* is the true representation of the divine character. We must have

recourse, therefore, to other topics of reasoning, and to other marks of a right or wrong moral disposition and early tendency. And I know not how a fairer view of the subject is to be presented, than by a comparison of what is said by Dr. Woods (pp. 45, 46) respecting the disposition of children to falsehood, pride, envy, wrath, revenge, selfishness, with what was said by me, in my former publication, of the early manifestations of the opposite dispositions and opposite traits of character; bearing in mind, as you proceed in the comparison, the design of the argument on each side. On my side it was to prove, not that man is by nature holy, but only that he is innocent, not totally depraved, and not more inclined by nature to vice than to virtue. On the part of Dr. Woods, it was to establish the doctrine of universal and total native depravity; the inclinations, affections, and actions by nature wholly wrong. Yet, though he declares this universal, unconquerable bias to the pleasures of sin (p. 44) to be a truth written as with a sunbeam; he has in proof of it merely stated the *existence* of those dispositions and passions in young children, which no Unitarian will deny; and has neither shown them to be *universal*, nor offered a single consideration to prove, that dispositions and passions of an opposite kind do not also exist as early, as generally, and with as much practical effect. If then I have shown, (and it is expressly admitted by Dr. Woods that I have,) that amiable dispositions, veracity, kindness, good will, are characteristics of early life, I have proved all that I proposed, and all that my

scheme of doctrine required ; whereas his showing, that there is also, on the other hand, much of falsehood, wrath, envy, selfishness, in the actual character, mingled with their good qualities and good dispositions, is no proof of the orthodox doctrine. That doctrine, as stated by himself, required him to show, that those bad passions and dispositions, of which he has given so vivid a picture, were unmixt, and that the other qualities did not exist.

Dr. Woods expresses his assent to the opinion of a late distinguished divine, grounded on his personal experience in the education of children ; who, in a strain of bold and powerful, but loose declamation, asserts, “ that in thirty years of attentive and anxious watchfulness of the conduct of thousands of children, committed to his care, he has seen *not one*, whose native character was virtuous, or whom he could pronounce free from the evil attributes he had just mentioned.” Those attributes, from which, among the thousands that had passed under his observation, he had been able to witness not a *single exemption*, were these. They were, “ rebellious, disobedient, unkind, wrathful, and revengeful. All were proud, ambitious, vain, and universally selfish. All of them were destitute of piety to God. They neither love, fear, nor obey him ; neither admire his divine excellence, nor are thankful for his unceasing loving kindness, and though taught these duties from the commencement of their childhood, yet can be persuaded to perform them by no species of instruction hitherto de-

vised.”* Such is the black picture of the youthful character given us by one of our most distinguished orthodox divines, and which meets the unqualified approbation of Dr. Woods.

An argument drawn from personal experience is most properly and satisfactorily answered by an appeal to experience. And in no case, I should think, could the appeal be more safely made, than in the present. Every one has had more or less opportunity of witnessing the conduct and the dispositions of children. Let the reader take a deliberate view of the youthful character drawn above, and compare it with his own experience. Let him say, whether, from all that he has observed in families and schools, rebellion and disobedience have seemed to him to be the prevailing state of things, and unkindness, wrath, and revenge, the constant and universal disposition. Or whether he has sometimes seen examples of obedience and submission to authority ; and a friendly and obliging disposition toward each other, manifested in a readiness to do each other kind offices, to forgive wrongs, to forget injuries, and to be at peace. Has he found pride, vanity, ambition, and selfishness so to predominate, as never to have met with one humble and modest youth ; nor one who was ready in any case to make a sacrifice of his own convenience, or his personal feelings or interest or gratification to perform a friendly or benevolent act ? Has he seen not one instance of early piety, not one who could be brought by faithful early

* Dwight's Theology, Vol. ii. p. 8.

instruction to love or fear or obey the Author of his being, to admire his character, or be grateful for his blessings?

The writer, who now addresses you, cannot speak of thousands, that have been intrusted to his care ; but he has, for a large part of his life, been concerned in the education of children and youth, and his experience has been widely different from that of the author just quoted. He has had occasion, as every parent and instructor must have, to experience much of the difficulty of giving the young a right direction, and keeping them in the right way. Yet, with all the strength of the passions and appetites, and all the influence of external temptation, amidst much to lament and condemn, he has seen much also to approve and to inspire hope ; and though none are without fault, a very small proportion of those, that have fallen under his notice, have deserved the character given in the above quotation indiscriminately to all. It is not a little surprising that so sound and clear a mind as that of this author, should not have been led to a different conclusion, as to the source of the depravity of which he complains, supposing his account of it not to have been exaggerated. We see in it a melancholy instance of the power of a system to mislead and pervert even the most powerful and upright mind. He had just before asserted, that “ children in the morning of life are unquestionably amiable,—more so in many respects, than at any future period.” How natural then would it have seemed, were there no system to stand in the way

of the conclusion, to have attributed the high degree of human depravity discovered at a later period, less to nature, and more to education; and to have thought, that the amiable qualities, which appeared at first, rather than the unamiable ones, which took their place afterward, were the true characteristics of human nature. If, from being amiable and well disposed at first, children become otherwise or less so under the hand of instruction and discipline, it would certainly seem natural for parents and teachers to inquire how far so remarkable a fact is chargeable to nature, and how far it may be attributed to fault or defect in the mode in which their moral education is conducted. If they "find it impossible," as alleged, "to persuade their children to love, fear, or obey God, to admire his divine excellence, or to be thankful for his unceasing loving-kindness," they are certainly called upon to examine most seriously, whether the cause of it is not to be found in the representations, which have been given them of the character and government of God.

LETTER III.

Depravity not innate, natural, &c. Universality of sin. In what sense. Both sin and virtue appear early. Neither of them implies an entire change of nature. Both are in the same degree spontaneous. Virtuous dispositions not more easily eradicated than vicious. In what sense it is certain that every child born into the world will be a sinner. As certain that, in the same sense, it will be a saint.

I AM now to call your attention to the discussion in the third chapter, relative to the sense in which the words *native*, *innate*, *natural*, *hereditary*, are used when applied to human depravity, and to the propriety of their use. For illustration of the subject, examples are taken by Dr. Woods from several other dispositions, affections, or traits of character, to which the term *natural* is usually applied; such as "the social principle, pity, natural affection, strength of mind, imagination, mental imbecility, peculiarities of natural taste, bodily diseases, resemblance of children to parents," &c. I have no occasion either to assent to the observations made upon these in this chapter, nor to call in question their correctness. It will be sufficient for me to show, as I expect to do to your entire satisfaction, that in their application to moral depravity, our author has failed of proving *that* to be in a similar sense *innate* or *natural*. He has only proved, that certain passions and affections, and certain powers make a part of our natural constitution, which are the source and foundation both of virtue and vice, of sin and holiness.

1. "The *universality of sin*" is the first circumstance to which the comparison is applied, as a proof that it is natural. "All are sinners, every

child of Adam has sinned." This is true in the sense in which the phrase, *all have sinned*, is used by the apostle. But it is not true in the sense in which it is used as a proof of native depravity; viz. as implying a character. "There is no man that doth good and sinneth not." (Ecc. vii. 20.) Yet there may be those who were never habitual sinners. But with what propriety is he denominated a sinner, who has committed but a single transgression, or whose acts of disobedience have been few and seldom; while his general disposition, and the general conduct of his life has been pure? Will any pretend that a single deed of justice will entitle him to the character of an honest man, who is habitually unjust in his dealings? Yet no reason can be assigned, why a single sin should constitute a sinner, any more than a single act of virtue should give the character of a virtuous man. When it is said, "there is no man that doeth good and sinneth not," the meaning is, that there is no man, who is not *a sinner* in such a sense, as to need repentance and forgiveness, although the general course of his life were innocent and virtuous, and his general temper and disposition right. Now I may with the same truth assert, that every human being has something good in his character, as that every one has something faulty; and that every child, as soon as it is capable of moral action, has some right affections and virtuous inclinations, as that it has some that are wrong and sinful; and the former will furnish the same proof that he is holy by nature, as the latter does, that he is sinful

by nature. But neither one nor the other is proved. All that can be inferred is, that it has by nature that, which renders it capable of becoming either holy or sinful.

2. Not more conclusive is the argument next attempted to be drawn from the fact, that "the indications of depravity appear early." Admit that they appear as early as can be alleged. Admit, as stated p. 52, "that incipient exercises of sinful affection are *among the earliest things*, which our memory can recal in ourselves, or which we are able to observe in others;" what will it prove to the purpose for which it is alleged, if *the other things, among which* these incipient exercises appear, are affections of the opposite character? Now I have shown, and Dr. Woods will not deny, that kind affections, gratitude, regard to truth, appear as early, as any sinful affections can be discerned. For the same reason also, that we may think it probable (p. 53) "that sinful affections exist in a lower degree earlier than they become visible, we have a right to infer, that the amiable and virtuous affections are in being in an incipient state at a period prior to that, in which we are able to trace their exercise and mark their effects. If then, native original depravity is proved by the one, it cannot be denied, that native original holiness is proved by the other.

3. Another circumstance distinguishing that which is *innate*, or belonging to man from the first, and which is applied to depravity (p. 53) is, "that it cannot be traced to any change in the constitu-

tion of his nature subsequent to his birth." And the whole reasoning of Dr. Woods on the subject proceeds upon the supposition, either that I had asserted, or that the doctrine which I advanced did imply, such a change. You will therefore be not a little surprised to find, that no such change in the constitution of our nature is either asserted or implied in all that I have said; and especially when you perceive, as you cannot fail to do, that the very difficulty, which is so elaborately displayed through two or three pages, lies not against the unitarian doctrine, but is actually chargeable upon the orthodox in its full force, and with all the absurdities which he has endeavoured to fix upon it. For it is a fundamental article of the orthodox doctrine, that the *nature* of every human being is wholly corrupt, and that all, who ever become holy, become so by an entire change of their nature. Now is there any greater difficulty or absurdity in the supposition of a change of nature from holy to sinful, than from sinful to holy? And might not the one be accounted for and explained upon the same principles, which would serve to account for and explain the other? The latter of these makes a part of the orthodox faith; but according to the unitarian doctrine, neither of them is to be accounted for or explained.

The doctrine, which I have before stated, as I supposed, too distinctly to be misunderstood, is, that men are born into the world neither holy nor sinful, but with those faculties, affections, and principles, by which they are capable of becoming

either; and that no change in the constitution of our nature is necessary, in order to their becoming either the one or the other. What we have actually to account for is, not a change of nature from original holiness to universal sinfulness, as you might be led to suppose from Dr. Woods' manner of discussing the subject; but the infinite variety of character, that soon appears in beings, who, at their birth, and for some time afterward, are apparently so nearly alike. We have to account for the fact, constantly presented to our observation, that those, between whom, in infancy, there is so exact a resemblance, as to their intellectual and moral state; as soon as they begin to use their faculties, should become so widely separated from each other, and distinguished by an endless diversity in the passions, affections, and dispositions, which mark their character. That the good and bad qualities are found so early to prevail, together and apart, in every different proportion and combination that can be imagined; gentleness and cruelty, pride and humility, the selfish and the social feelings, sensuality, and spiritual-mindedness, the fear of God and sense of duty, and regardlessness of the will and authority of God. Now to account for this variety, beginning to discover itself so early, increasing as the field of activity enlarges, as the relations of life multiply, as reason gains strength, as knowledge is extended, and as the passions and appetites assume new appearances; we think it sufficient to assert the activity and freedom of man. By this is meant,

that in every action of life, after moral agency commences by the exercise of those faculties, on which it depends, he has the power of making either a right or wrong choice ; and that according as he exercises that power and uses the freedom it implies, he actually becomes better or worse, the good or bad dispositions are strengthened and gain an ascendancy, and the good or bad tendencies prevail. It is to this inherent activity, and freedom of choice in its direction, that we attribute the difference of conduct of persons in similar circumstances, and the difference of character formed under similar discipline. This, and this only, we think, will account for all the phenomena of human action, and all the varieties in the human character. Without denying the influence of motives, or impairing their value, and the importance of enforcing those, by which men ought to be governed, we thus account for the fact, otherwise inexplicable, that the same motives have not the same influence over all minds, nor over the same mind at all times. This we attribute to a power, which the mind itself has, of obeying or resisting any motive that is presented.

But how is this variety of conduct and character to be explained upon the orthodox supposition of total native depravity? Beings wholly corrupt by nature, inclined only to evil, all whose affections and actions are wrong, can exhibit none of this variety. The first good thought or right affection,—a single virtuous action or resolution must indicate an entire change of nature, and then every thought, and

affection and action must be holy. For, as by the supposition, a corrupt nature can produce no good thought or action, so a holy nature can produce no evil thought or action. Every individual of mankind, accordingly, must be either wholly good or wholly bad; entirely holy or entirely sinful; right in every affection, thought, and action, or wrong in every thought, affection, and action. I ask whether observation and experience confirm this description, and teach us that such is the character of man; or whether they do not present a race of beings, the best of whom are not without sin, and the worst of whom, we are not sure, are wholly destitute of every good quality, and strangers to every good thought, affection, and action.

The whole discussion (pp. 53—57) would have been spared, had Dr. Woods understood the single phrase, to which he so many times refers, in the sense, in which a slight attention to the whole passage in which it stands, and the whole scope of my reasoning, must have shown him, was the sense, in which it was used by me. It is scarcely possible, I think, for an intelligent and attentive reader not to perceive, that in asserting, as I did, (p. 27) “that veracity is the general character of children, until the disposition and tendency of nature has been changed by education, example, and circumstances,” I must have meant something quite different from that “universal change in the moral constitution of man,” (p. 54) “change in the constitution of his nature,” (p. 53) “change in our nature,” (p. 56) which is the whole foundation of the argument in

those pages, and without which the whole is to no purpose.

If the expressions which I made use of require the interpretation which is put upon them, I can only lament having made so careless and incorrect a use of language; but on the other hand, if the words themselves fairly admit, and the whole passage in connexion requires a different interpretation, I cannot but regret that my opponent should waste so much reasoning, grounded on a false interpretation.

4. A fourth reason is assigned (p. 57) “for considering man’s depravity natural,” viz. that it is *spontaneous*, like the animal appetites, gratitude, compassion, &c. which “require no laborious discipline to produce them. Corrupt affections, it is said, are excited in children as soon as the occasions for exercising them occur. The feeling of pride, ill will, and revenge shows itself spontaneously in their looks and actions.” But do not good affections also, such as kindness, gratitude, and humility arise as spontaneously, as early, and as often? I am persuaded that the experience of every parent will answer, that they do. With what propriety then can the former be alleged as proofs of natural depravity, rather than the latter of natural holiness? Why are not the amiable qualities as clear indications of something good in our nature, as the opposite unamiable ones of something bad? That it is *spontaneous*, “that it arises of its own accord, before they have considered whether it is good or bad, is as just a reason

for saying, that it takes away the immorality and blame-worthiness of what is bad, as that it destroys the virtue, or impairs the merit of what is good.

5. A similar and equally satisfactory reply may be made to the next proof, “that moral evil in man is natural or innate, viz. that it is hard to be eradicated, and resists powerful means of overcoming it.” For, the same may be said with equal truth of the good affections and principles of our nature, which are the foundation and the defence of virtue. If vicious propensities are not easily cured, and bad habits not easily corrected ; so neither is it easy, in many instances, to eradicate virtuous principles ; and they even triumph over the united influence of strong temptation, powerful motive, and bad example. Such is sometimes the natural love of truth, that no temptation of interest, and no motive of fear are sufficient to overcome it. Such the sense of justice, as effectually to resist selfishness. Such the power of natural modesty, as to impose a restraint on the strongest propensities, and to preserve innocence and purity in the midst of temptation. If frequent and melancholy instances occur of children, who, with the advantages of good instruction and good example, have yielded to temptation, resisted all motives to virtue, and all efforts to save them, and abandoned themselves to vice ; we have seen others, on the other hand, that have maintained a virtuous course, amidst strong temptations ; and, in spite of bad instruction and bad example, have preserved their purity, piety, and fidelity uncor-

rupted. I cheerfully join in the appeal to experience on this subject, confident that her report will be fatal to the orthodox doctrine of depravity, if we shall be as ready to listen to that part of it, which relates to what is amiable and virtuous, as to that which states the corrupt and vicious tendencies and propensities of early life.

6. To the reasoning on pp. 59, 60, grounded on "the certainty that every child born into the world will be a sinner," whence it is inferred, that this certainty must have its foundation in the constitution of human nature, and not in any thing accidental to man; the reply is short and complete. The fallacy lies, in the first place, in the sense in which the word *sinner* is used, and in the second place, in a part only of the truth, and not the whole being expressed. If the word sinner is here used, as the designation of a character, and it be intended by the use of this term to assert, that the prevailing disposition, the affections, thoughts, and actions universally will be sinful, the assertion is not true. It is far from being an acknowledged fact, that all men are sinners in that sense, or that any one individual child will certainly be a sinner in the same sense. The argument proceeds on the assumption of the very point in controversy. But if it be only meant, that we can with certainty predict concerning any child that is born into the world, that it will commit sin, or will have some sinful affection, which may be said to constitute him a sinner in a certain sense, though his character be generally virtuous, then the argument is wholly fallacious. Because, as I observed in the second place, but a part of the truth is

thus presented. It is as certain, that every child that is born into the world will have some good affections, as that it will have those, that are sinful; and it may be predicted with the same confidence, that it will practise some virtue, as that it will commit some sin. It is accordingly, like each of the other arguments, of no more avail to establish the doctrine of natural depravity, than it is to establish that of original and innate holiness.

In the concluding paragraph of this chapter it is admitted by Dr. Woods, as it had been virtually before, that kindness, gratitude, love of truth, and other things of a like kind are, as I had represented them to be, natural properties of man; and it is implied that they are admitted to be natural in the same sense, and for as good reasons, as depravity is natural; for he says, "when those reasons are given, we may see, whether the reasons, which prove them to be natural, are stronger than those, which prove human depravity to be so." My answer is, that it has not been pretended, that they are stronger. It is enough for my purpose if they are *as strong*. It establishes all that I have wished to maintain in opposition to the orthodox faith, viz. that neither virtue nor vice is innate; that man is neither sinful nor holy by nature; that he is exclusively inclined neither to vice nor virtue, but is by nature equally capable of either. If, as the paragraph before us would seem to imply, all that the orthodox wish to prove is, that sin is natural to man in the same sense that holiness is, there need be no controversy on the subject; and all that has been written might have been spared.

LETTER IV.

Misrepresentation of the unitarian method of reasoning. Evasion of the point at issue. Depravity not shown to be consistent with the moral character of God.

I now request you to proceed with me in the examination of the fourth chapter of the book before me, which is intended to show *the consistency of the orthodox doctrine of depravity with the moral attributes of God*. The author introduces his views of the proper method of reasoning on the subject, by a complaint, which it is necessary for me to notice, in order to remove the false impression, which might otherwise be received, as to the method of reasoning pursued by unitarians. Now I am not aware, that it is maintained by any unitarian, much less that it is, as is implied p. 62, “a common principle with unitarians, that a difficulty, which they are not able to solve, is to be considered as sufficient to disprove a doctrine supported by clear and conclusive evidence.” If it be so, Dr. Woods will be able to refer to the book and page, where the assertion is to be found; and he ought to have done it, when he ventured to make so extraordinary a charge. But he will be able to support the charge only by resorting to such remote inferences, as will enable one to prove any thing from any writing. The plain fact is, that the method of reasoning, stated by our author, to be that, which should be adopted upon this, as well as physical subjects, is precisely that, which unitarians have uniformly pursued, and on which they have entirely relied. They have always rested the question respecting the

doctrine of depravity, where Dr. Woods says it ought to be placed, on the evidence of observation, experience, and the word of God. "Whatever God has declared, and observation and experience teach, must be unhesitatingly admitted as certain truth." But in ascertaining what is taught by observation and experience, there is room for inquiry, discussion, and diversity of opinion. It is not a single unconnected fact or phenomenon, that is to decide the question, the existence of which is to be determined by a concurrent testimony, and where there is no room for disagreement. On the contrary, so extensive, various, and complicated are they, that the great difficulty is to settle the question, what observation and experience do teach. Nor have we any better reason for thinking, that it may be easily and hastily decided, in all cases, "what God has declared by revelation." The revelation of God is conveyed to us in human language, in itself imperfect, and liable to be misunderstood and misinterpreted; communicated by imperfect men; connected with history and a variety of other circumstances, from which it is to be separated; transmitted to us through a long succession of ages, and by means of books, which have been translated from one language into another of a very different construction, and in which it is sometimes not easy to be satisfied, that the same meaning is conveyed, as is expressed in the original. From these considerations, and others which might be added, it happens, that the question, what God has declared by revelation, is one that is not to be answered by

adducing a single, clear, and decisive declaration. The answer is to be furnished by an extensive and close investigation. It is sometimes to be drawn from a comparison of passages, between which apparent contradiction is to be reconciled; sometimes it is to be found in the application of rules and principles of interpretation to bold and uncommon figures; sometimes by eliciting the meaning conveyed in references and allusions to things, of which we can now have but imperfect knowledge; and not seldom are we required to choose between different interpretations, where a slight balance of evidence only for one in preference to the other must decide the choice.

It happens accordingly, that in making up our opinion what the doctrine of revelation is on some important points, its consistency with other doctrines, which are clear and admit of no doubt, must constitute a part of the ground upon which we proceed. This I believe is allowed on all sides to be fair and necessary. It is distinctly recognized to be so by Dr. Woods himself. Speaking of another important doctrine of religion, (p. 163) he says, "I consider it to be one of those plain truths of revelation, which ought to limit and regulate our conceptions of other subjects, and *I make it a rule,*" he adds, "*not to admit any views of any other doctrine, inconsistent with this.*" Dr. Woods then admits, that in the case to which he refers, and I presume he will not say that the principle is limited to that case, the consistency of a doctrine proposed with another unquestionable doctrine of religion makes a part of

the ground upon which the doctrine itself is to be received. As the moral character of God then is an established point, about which there is no question, the consistency of the doctrine of depravity with the moral character of God must make a part of the argument, by which depravity is to be proved as a matter of fact. It is evident, therefore, that it can never be so proved as a matter of fact by any other mode of reasoning, that its consistency with the moral character of God can be assumed upon that ground, as not needing any further proof.

With these remarks I now refer you to what is said in my second Letter to Trinitarians and Calvinists, and in connexion with it to the sixteen first pages in the fourth chapter of Dr. Woods' reply. You will be able then to estimate the elaborate argument in those pages, grounded wholly on a misinterpretation of the meaning of a single sentence, and which it is evident Dr. Woods himself suspected at least to be a misinterpretation, and which a fair view of it in connexion with the whole argument in which it stands, would have shown him was so unquestionably.

Towards the close of the chapter, Dr. Woods proceeds to offer some direct arguments to prove the consistency of native depravity with the moral perfections of God. But I shall endeavour to show, that all he has said is liable to one of the two following objections, viz. It either assumes for the argument that, which requires to be first proved; or it proceeds by a palpable evasion of the point at issue. Thus it cannot be necessary for

me to multiply words in order to show you, that, (p. 79) instead of leaving the naked statement of several suppositions, on the grounds of which it is asserted, that the doctrines in question may be reconciled with each other; it behoved him to offer some proof of the several points, which he affirms if proved, will show, that the orthodox doctrine of depravity is consistent with the justice, wisdom, and goodness of God. For a single example, as a specimen of the whole, when he had said, "that man's native depravity is not in the least inconsistent with divine justice, *if it be so, that man, notwithstanding his native depravity, never suffers more, than what he truly deserves for his own personal sins;*" he was bound to prove that, according to our natural notions of justice, a being created with a nature totally depraved, inclined only to evil, and incapable of having a good thought, affection, or inclination without an influence of the spirit of God, which is not granted to him, and which he can do nothing to obtain, and is punished with eternal misery for his sins committed under these circumstances, yet suffers no more than he truly deserves. He has prudently forborne to attempt this; and the argument is accordingly without force, being built on an unsupported supposition.

Instead of this, assuming, (p. 81) "that native depravity is to be explained upon the same principle as the existence of moral evil, and that the proper answer to the question how either of them is consistent with the moral perfection of God, is the same;" all that is said in the subsequent pages is

applicable to the question, whether the existence of moral evil be reconcileable with the moral perfections of God, but not to the question, whether the same moral evil, having its source in natural depravity, can be so reconciled. This is a manifest evasion of the point at issue ; and it is rendered complete by the author's constantly confounding together *the beginning of sin*, and *its source and origin*, as if they meant the same thing. Thus it is asked, (p. 83) "How does it appear that the moral perfection of God must necessarily preclude the existence of sin at the commencement of his moral agency?" and again it is said, "when we assert that man is a sinner, or begins to sin as soon as he is a moral agent, we no more attribute sin to the immediate agency of God, than those do, who assert that sin begins at any subsequent time."

Now the question at issue is not, as is here implied, *at what time*, whether earlier or later, the commencement of sin may be consistent with the moral perfections of God ; but whether its originating in a nature wholly corrupt, in natural affections wholly wrong, and an inclination only to evil, in connexion with the other doctrines of calvinism, which subject him to wrath and eternal misery for possessing such a nature, be consistent with the moral attributes of God. Not a word, that you find in the chapter before us, reaches to this point ; nothing, therefore, which the subject of the chapter required and gave us a right to expect.

He, who will reconcile the orthodox doctrine of depravity with the moral character of God, must

show, that it is consistent with the justice and goodness of God, to bring into existence a race of beings capable of high degrees of enjoyment and suffering; on account of the sin of the first of the race, to punish all the succeeding generations by creating them, not as he was created, holy, pure, with right affections, and inclined to good; but totally corrupt, inclined only to evil, every affection wrong, naturally hating him who made them, and all that is good, and utterly incapable of thinking or feeling otherwise than they do think and feel, until a total change of their nature is effected by a mighty influence of the spirit of God; to obtain which influence and consequent change of nature, they are incapable of contributing in any degree by any effort they can make. That this influence is actually exercised upon some, producing an entire change in their disposition and will, causing them to love supremely what they before hated supremely, but exercised in a perfectly arbitrary manner, not on account of any thing in them, or any thing they had done or could do to deserve to be thus distinguished from the rest of their race, who are suffered to remain, as they were first made, unholy and sinful, and to perish; but by a sovereign act of election, according to which it was predetermined before they were brought into being thus to deliver them, and to leave the rest to hopeless, remediless and endless woe.

If it is your opinion, that Dr. Woods has shown this in the chapter before us, you will be satisfied that he has done all, that he was required to do.

Otherwise you will perceive that he has yet before him a task, which he will find it not easy to accomplish even to his own satisfaction.

LETTER V.

Native depravity not consistent with moral agency. Preparatory considerations. Improper and deceptive use of terms. In what sinfulness consists. How an innocent being may become a sinner. Definition of a moral agent. Course pursued by Dr. Woods. Adam's transgression. Quotation from Dr. Emmons.

THE question proposed in the Vth Chapter, viz. "Whether native depravity be consistent with moral agency," is one that is involved in greater difficulty, than almost any other that belongs to the calvinistic controversy. I shall prepare the way for what I have to advance on this subject by attempting to correct a manner of speaking, which is very common, but which, I think, is calculated to introduce confusion, and wholly to mislead the mind. What I refer to is the manner in which the terms sin and holiness, sinners and saints, regenerate and unregenerate, are used by theological writers. They are employed in theological discussions in such a manner, as to convey no true ideas; so as to express nothing to which we find any thing in existence answering. Your impression taken from the common use of these terms is, that sin and holiness are not only opposites, but opposites in such a sense, that they can never exist together in the same person. And in conformity with this distinction, that all mankind are divided

into two classes, perfectly distinct and entirely separate from each other, viz. saints and sinners, the righteous and the wicked; the former wholly righteous, the latter totally wicked. But you find no such beings actually existing. You meet with nothing in your intercourse with the world, answering to the images, that books have presented to your mind. None, on the one hand, appear to be so totally corrupt, as to be utterly destitute of right affections and good feelings, to have no sense of justice, benevolence, or truth, and to perform no good actions. On the other hand, in the best men you discover faults and defects of character. None are so pure and perfect, that you see in them nothing to censure, no expression of the passions or affections, and no indulgence of the appetites, which is sinful in kind, or excessive and unreasonable, and therefore criminal, in degree. In each individual with whom you have any intercourse, from childhood to old age, you discover, not a single unvaried hue of moral character, but a mixture, in various proportions, of qualities exceedingly different from each other. In none are the virtues or vices found to exist in the highest degree, or in the same degree at all times. Often the character of men, whatever its prevalent cast, is seen to undergo considerable changes, to be apparently unfixt and vacillating, the moral principle, sense of duty, fear of God, power of conscience, or whatever you call that restraining and regulating principle, which should influence and govern the whole conduct of life, operating more effectually at one time than at another.

Now in all this, our experience is certainly very different from what we should expect it to be, if the orthodox use of the terms in question were correct; if, for example, all human beings were sinners, or holy, in the sense in which these terms are applied; and it is by reasoning from those terms, as if the sense in which they are used was the true sense, that we are led to false conclusions, and often from not perceiving this first error, are unable to discover where the fallacy lies, which has led us to those that follow.

It may help us somewhat to recover ourselves, to recollect, that this use of the terms in question had its origin in the very system, which it is thus brought to support. It was not observation and experience, that first suggested the separation of mankind into two classes, so entirely distinct, and opposite to each other in a moral view, to be designated by terms understood as expressing such entire opposition. The terms, indeed, are taken from the sacred writings, where they are used in a popular sense; but it was that system of theology, of which the doctrine of total depravity and irresistible grace make a part, that suggested their application in a strict and literal sense.

Now in order to discover the fallacy by which we have been misled, we must pursue the opposite course. We must begin with facts, as observation and experience present them. What we perceive in ourselves and witness in all about us is, not a single and unshaded character, but a mixture of qualities, dispositions and tendencies. In endeav-

ouring to trace these to their source, we shall find their proximate cause in several parts of our sensual, intellectual and moral constitution. Thus we find in ourselves, and in all human beings, passions and appetites and affections, that are continually prompting to activity. These have all some real or supposed good toward which they are directed; and all of them have external objects answering to them, and suitable for them. Reason is also given us to be the guide of our conduct, to enable us to distinguish what is right and wrong in conduct, and to know what may be done with innocence and safety, and what is to be avoided as criminal and hurtful. And, when reason has performed her office as a monitor beforehand, conscience is implanted within us, as a faithful censor, to approve or condemn us afterward, according as we shall have obeyed or disregarded her direction.

Now in the simple possession of no part of our physical or moral constitution is there any merit or guilt, any thing to deserve praise or blame. Passions and appetites that are the strongest, are innocent as a part of our make, and we only incur guilt, when we follow their impulse in disobedience to the laws God has imposed in giving us reason, and in violation of conscience. This applies to every appetite of our animal nature even the strongest. To whatever degrees of guilt or misery it may lead, the appetite itself is not sinful. It is not eradicated in those, who are born to holiness and virtue. It exists in the most heavenly minded. The reason why it is sinless in him, and not in the

profligate is, not that it is different in its nature, but that it is subjected to restraint and a proper direction in its operation.

It applies also to the strongest passions of the human breast ; hope, fear, love, desire, anger and hatred. Take any one of them. Let it be that, in the exercise of which more guilt, it is probable, is actually incurred, than in either of the others. I mean anger. In the passion itself there is no sin. It becomes sinful only by being voluntarily indulged in degree beyond what reason allows and justice requires, toward objects by which it is not deserved, or longer than is demanded to answer the purpose, for which the passion was originally implanted in the human breast. The passion is not eradicated in the best of men. It is only subjected to the restraints and regulations, which reason and conscience impose. The mere susceptibility to its operation in the good man and the sinner is the same. The difference between them consists in its being on the one hand duly controlled in its exercise, or, on the other hand, suffered to break forth with intemperate heat, and in all the hurtful forms of cruelty and peevishness, rage and revenge.

The same remarks apply to the principle of self-love. Though it may be a fruitful source of sin, and does undoubtedly lie at the foundation of much of the moral evil that is in the world ; in the affection itself there is no guilt. It is as strong in the innocent and virtuous, as in the corrupt and wicked. It is sinful, only when it becomes an exclusive passion ; when it extinguishes the kind

and benevolent affections, impairs the sense and prevents the exercise of justice and humanity, and degenerates into pride, avarice or ambition; and leads to the formation of a character and of habits, from which the social affections and social virtues are excluded.

To impart a moral character to our conduct, and render us praise or blame worthy in it, other parts of our nature, besides those that have just been the immediate subject of consideration, are to be taken into the account. As has before been suggested, there must be an understanding to perceive the effects of actions and their tendency, and that moral discernment, which distinguishes between right and wrong. These, as well as the passions, appetites and affections, to which it is their office to give the right direction, are necessary to constitute a moral agent, capable of good or ill desert, and the proper subject of a moral law.

Now in a practical application of this view of our animal, intellectual, and moral nature, in the judgment we pass upon ourselves and others, the result is, that we blame others, and are conscious of deserving blame ourselves, just in proportion as in obedience to the passions and appetites, we violate conscience. For conscience is the immediate law of our moral nature. Under whatever dispensation we live, it is equally the guide and judge of our actions. The only difference is in the greater or less degree of clearness, in which the rule of life and principles of judgment are revealed to us, according as we have only the light of nature, or

have also that of revelation to guide us. Thus, I have observed, do we always judge, in estimating the degree of good or ill desert in ourselves or others. We consider neither an idiot nor a madman as accountable for his actions, though either of them may act under the influence of the strongest appetite or the most violent passion; for this plain reason, that being incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong, he is not a proper subject of moral government.

These remarks have been intended to bring us to a just view of the nature of sin, and in what guilt or ill desert consists. It is not in any thing that is born with us, nor even in all, that we are by nature, whether appetites, affections, or passions. These are all alike in their native state, equally innocent, undeserving of either praise or blame, and consistent with his becoming either a virtuous man or a sinner, in whom they originally exist in any degree of strength, in which they are ever implanted in the heart of man by the Author of his being.

Upon the ground of these observations, and by a similar process, having ascertained what constitutes sin, and makes him a sinner, who performs the act; let us now proceed to inquire how a human being may first become a sinner. Let us suppose such a being in the full possession of the whole animal, intellectual, and moral constitution of man in its mature state. He has by the supposition then together with all the natural appetites and the passions belonging to man in their usual strength,

the intellectual and moral powers of our nature in their full maturity. Thus constituted, he is placed in a situation to bring all his faculties into exercise ; surrounded by objects suited to the several appetites, and in the midst of relations in which there is room for all the passions to be called forth. Within certain limits, prescribed by reason and conscience, the indulgence of every appetite is natural and innocent, beyond which it becomes sinful. The same is true also, as respects each of the passions. It is possible, therefore, that for any given time, the directing and controlling power of reason and conscience may be preserved, and a being thus constituted and so placed by the Creator shall retain its innocence, and continue free from all moral defect. Yet it is possible also, on the other hand, that it may depart from the path of virtue and become a sinner, at any moment. For he becomes so by a single instance of a voluntary violation of known duty in obedience to either of the appetites or passions. By the first, though it should be the only instance of this nature, he becomes a sinner in such a sense, as to need repentance,—in the sense in which it may be said that all men are sinners,—and in which it is said in the sacred writings, that there is no man that doth good and sinneth not.

It is believed that the supposition which has now been made is the only one, upon which can be solved in a satisfactory manner the great problem of the introduction of moral evil into the system ; and by which we are to account for the first sin of the

first man ; whether it were committed soon after his creation, or after he had continued long in a state of innocence and moral rectitude. It will account also for the rapid increase of moral evil, and its spread after it was once introduced into the system. The exact balance and right adjustment of the several parts of the animal and moral constitution was then disturbed. One deviation from the right path made another more likely to take place, because, by a single act of criminal indulgence, the power of temptation was increased, and that of resistance diminished. The passion or appetite that triumphed had gained strength, and the force of moral principle was impaired.

The descendants of the first transgressor, accordingly, commence their existence under circumstances of increased liability to sin, and greater difficulty of preserving their innocence, and retaining their moral uprightness ; not because of any change of their nature from what it was originally, but on account of a difference in the external circumstances, under which they come into the world. Example is added to the influences which existed before. Occasions of sin are multiplied, and inducements to it are increased and strengthened. Hence, though the moral constitution of man were by nature the same in all the descendants of Adam, that it was originally in him, any individual of his posterity will be far more likely, than he was, to lose the innocence and moral uprightness in which he was created, insomuch that without supposing any inherent native depravity, as the cause, there

may be what we term a moral certainty respecting any child that is born into the world, that if it live to become a moral and accountable being, it will become a sinner; that is, it will commit sin, deserve punishment, and stand in need of repentance and forgiveness.

But how different is this from his becoming a sinner in the orthodox sense of the word, wholly inclined to evil, and all his affections and actions wrong and sinful! As I use the word here, and as I would be understood in using the phrase, *all men are sinners*, the meaning is, one who has committed sin, who needs divine forgiveness, but whose affections and thoughts and actions may yet be generally and habitually right.

By a single voluntary indulgence of a wrong affection, according to the scheme for which I contend, a man becomes a sinner.* A single right affection, according to that of my opponents, renders him a saint. It will be a question of serious import with every one, whose estimate of the human character is drawn from observation and experience, and not formed upon system and hypothesis, whether there ever existed in the world a sinner, answering to the orthodox definition of the word.

* Experience has taught me the necessity of guarding against being misunderstood. The reader, therefore, who perceives an apparent contradiction between what is here said, with what he finds on p. 27, is requested to read that passage with sufficient attention to perceive, that I make a distinction between a *habitual sinner* and one who, though prevailinglly virtuous, is so far a sinner as to need pardon, and that it is in compliance with usage, and not as being strictly correct, that I apply the term in the latter sense.

With the views, which have now been stated, in our minds, let us pass in review the reasoning of Dr. Woods in the chapter under consideration, and take notice of his exceptions to what I had said on the subject in my former publication.

The inquiry, "whether the orthodox doctrine of depravity be inconsistent with moral agency," is very properly introduced by the definition of a moral agent, which is, that "a moral agent is one who acts under a moral law, and is accountable for his actions." To this definition, for the purpose of the present inquiry, I make no objection. But as the doctrine of depravity is charged with being inconsistent with moral agency, and it was his professed design to meet this charge, it was naturally to have been expected, that he would proceed directly from the definition, to the statement of the argument which was to prove, that, thus defined, the doctrine of depravity, as held by the orthodox, was not inconsistent with it. The course which he has actually pursued, however, is somewhat different.

His first step is, pp. 86, 87, to represent me, in admitting that men are capable of sin, and may be actually the subjects of sin, as soon as they are moral agents; and that they are moral agents by their natural birth; as implying all that is necessary to establish the doctrine of natural depravity.*

* You will observe that he does not pretend, that it establishes the consistency of natural depravity with moral agency, which is the point here in question, but only the fact of its existence, that is, that mankind are naturally depraved.

But the slightest attention to my argument, when I said what implied, that men are moral agents by their birth, will show my meaning to have been, that by their natural birth they possess the powers and faculties, which are requisite to moral agency. How soon they are so far developed, and actually come into exercise as to render him, who thus possesses them, accountable for his actions, it was no part of my design to decide. But, if the account which I have just given of the manner in which an innocent person may become a sinner be correct, you will perceive, that at whatever period it takes place, though its very first act should be a sinful one, it will prove nothing respecting natural depravity.

I have no hesitation in acceding to what the author says in the next paragraph; that "men must be really as capable of sin at the commencement of their moral existence, as at any subsequent period." They undoubtedly are so; and for the same reason also, they are equally capable of holiness.

Our author next proceeds (pp. 88, 89) to a representation of the gradual development of the infant faculties, and the gradual process by which, from the smallest beginnings, the children, in whom this takes place, become moral and accountable beings; in which, as far as it goes, I fully concur. "In early childhood," he says, "there is a small and almost imperceptible beginning of sinful affection, a beginning exactly corresponding to the feeble dawn of reason and conscience, and the incipient state of moral agency.

After this, sinful affection and action gradually increase with the increasing strength of the intellectual and moral faculties, till they rise to their ultimate state." This, I observe, expresses in my apprehension, as far as it goes, the exact truth. It only required, in order to express the whole truth, that he should have added, that holy affection and virtuous action gradually increase in the same manner, and by the same laws. But how will the account he has here given consist with the orthodox doctrine of *total native depravity*? If we are by nature totally depraved, inclined wholly to evil, every affection and action wrong; what room is there for becoming more and more sinful? Wholly sinful at first, any change to which we were subject, it would seem, must be to a less sinful state, since it is impossible it should be to one more so. Besides, all this you perceive also relates to the *existence of natural depravity* only, and not to its consistency with moral agency.

The writer next proceeds, by an elaborate discussion running through twenty pages, to show, not what the question which he had proposed at the head of the chapter required, viz. "that depravity is not inconsistent with moral agency;" but a very different thing, and one that has no necessary connexion with it, that is, that in denying native depravity, and attempting to account for the existence of moral evil without it, I am chargeable with the absurdity of making sin the cause of itself, accounting for the first act of sin by a preceding sinful act; or else of referring it to a cause

not sinful, and thus making holiness the cause of sin ; a bad action to flow from a good disposition. Whether any such absurdity is involved in my manner of accounting for the existence of moral evil, and its commencement in the individual sinner, I am ready to submit to your judgment, referring you only to what I have before said on the subject, together with the account which you find in the beginning of this Letter ; where I endeavour to show, in what manner sin may have been first introduced, and an individual person, originally innocent, may become a sinner. If that is admitted to be a rational and satisfactory account, the charge which I refer to, and the whole passage in which it is contained, require no further answer.

But besides that no part of the reasoning, in the chapter under consideration, is directed to the point, which was formally announced at the beginning of it, as the subject of inquiry ; the conclusions toward which it actually tended, and which it was designed to establish, you will perceive, the author has completely overthrown in his last paragraph. For we there (p. 110) meet with the following concession, as creditable to the frankness and honesty of the writer, as it is fatal to the only argument, which is of any weight in support of the main doctrine in question. “ I frankly acknowledge,” he says, “ that the occurrence of sin in Adam, who is admitted on both sides to have been sinless at first, does invalidate the argument of the orthodox, so far as they have attempted to prove the native depravity of man from the naked fact, that they all

commit sin. For if an individual, the parent of our race, may change from native innocence to sin, we could not by our own reason certainly determine, that it would be impossible for the whole race to change in like manner." Let me now request you, with the passage just quoted fresh in your mind, to turn back and reperuse the whole preceding discussion. You find a large portion of the chapter is employed in exposing the absurdity of the supposition, that sin can possibly arise from any thing, but a previous sinful disposition. Yet it is admitted that Adam had no such previous sinful disposition. It is asserted (p. 93) that, "according to the settled constitution of human nature, no motives, no exercise of the mind, no occasions can ever produce a new moral disposition or affection, that is to say, one which does not in some way already belong to the mind." Yet in Adam a new affection and disposition was produced, opposite entirely to any, that had existed before. It is again asserted (p. 98) that, "if you would account for the origin of moral evil in man, you must account for the wrong disposition or sinfulness of heart, which is *just as evidently presupposed* in every particular act and every mode of sinning, as goodness of disposition is presupposed in every act of obedience, or as the principle of gravitation is presupposed in every instance, in which a stone falls to the earth. "My position is," he adds, "that men have this sinfulness or depravity of heart by nature, and that it is not the effect of any change they undergo after their birth." But Adam was holy by nature, and yet

became a sinner. And Dr. Woods has not informed us how he came by that previous sinfulness of heart, which is so evidently presupposed in the first sin he committed. Besides, if goodness, as stated above, is presupposed in every act of obedience, there is, according to Dr. Woods' own principles, the same evidence that men are good by nature, as that they are sinful by nature, that they have naturally right dispositions, as that they have those, which are wrong; for he admits some of the virtues to be characteristics of early life, and here we are told, that good actions must proceed and can proceed only from good disposition, that the good must exist in nature, before it can exist in act, so that, to obey the law, by the exercise of kindness, gratitude, and the practice of truth, presupposes a goodness of disposition, or a right tendency of nature. It as certainly presupposes a holy nature, as bad affections or actions presuppose a corrupt nature, or as the fall of any individual stone presupposes gravity.

But it is said, (p. 112) "It is as true of Adam, as of any other man, that every sinful volition and act of his presupposed a sinful disposition, and must have arisen from it. And the first existence of that sinful disposition in his case is a fact, as hard to be accounted for, as the existence of native depravity in his posterity." It is to be presumed then, that in Dr. Woods' opinion, it is to be accounted for in the same way, as far as the circumstances of the case will admit. Nor do I perceive any reasonable grounds of objection, or that it can

be better accounted for in any other way. I can see no greater difficulty in the one case, than in the other. The only difference is, that God is supposed to bring all the posterity of Adam into being at first with a nature wholly depraved, entirely hostile to himself and his laws, and with inclinations and affections wholly wrong; whereas he made Adam at first holy, with a nature and disposition tending only to good, but changed his nature afterward, and gave him a disposition to evil. For according to all the reasoning in this book, and several express declarations in the chapter under consideration, it is a manifest contradiction, and the greatest absurdity possible, to suppose that Adam, with a nature entirely holy, could do any thing himself to change that nature, or, until it was changed, could possibly commit a single sin. For a single sin implies a previous sinful disposition. To make him a sinner then, after he had been created at first holy, must have been an immediate act of God. An exertion of the same Almighty power is implied in it, as was required in making all his descendants originally sinners, that is, with a nature wholly depraved. The nature of the one, as well as of the other, from which, according to the scheme in contemplation, all their sinful acts proceeded, must have been the direct work of God. Nor can I perceive that either of them is more or less consistent, than the other, with the moral character and government of God, or with the moral agency of man. Yet Dr. Woods seems to have a secret thought, or an apprehension that his

readers may have a thought, that there is a difference of some importance; since he forbears to say explicitly of the latter, what he does of the former. It is an inference only, though certainly one, which it was intended should be made, that the change of nature in Adam from holy to sinful is as much the direct and sole act of God, as the original gift of a corrupt nature to his posterity. In coupling them together, however, and joining with them the case of "the angels, who kept not their first estate," he chooses to say, "it is an ultimate fact in God's empire," although the whole preceding reasoning has proceeded upon the ground, that as respects the posterity of Adam, it is not an ultimate fact, but one which was to be accounted for and explained.

More intrepid and less cautious advocates of the orthodox faith have not hesitated to declare explicitly, what Dr. Woods has, with evident reluctance, allowed us to infer, respecting the agency of God in the first sinful act of the first man. Dr. Emmons, one of the ablest, and clearest, and most consistent writers, that has appeared on the side of orthodoxy, thus expresses himself. "As all other methods to account for the fall of Adam by the instrumentality of second causes, are insufficient to remove the difficulty, it seems necessary to have recourse to the divine agency, and to suppose that God wrought in Adam both to will and to do in his first transgression. His first sin was a free voluntary exercise, *produced by divine operation* in the view of motives. Satan placed certain

motives before his mind, which, *by a divine energy*, took hold of his heart, and led him into sin.”* Again, “while Adam was placed in such a perfectly holy and happy situation, it is extremely difficult to conceive how he should be led into sin without the immediate interposition of the Deity. It is in vain to attempt to account for the first sin of the first man by the instrumentality of second causes. And until we are willing to admit the interposition of the Supreme first cause, we must be content to consider the fall of Adam as an unfathomable mystery.”†

What Dr. Emmons has so boldly and distinctly said, is, as I have before observed, fully implied in what I have quoted from the book before me. It is, that the first existence of a sinful disposition in Adam, like native depravity in his descendants, is to be traced to the same *direct, positive, sovereign* act of creative power. The only difference between him and them being this, that a sinful nature was given to them at first, but to him after he had for some time possessed a sinless nature. “Each to be regarded, as an “ultimate fact in God’s empire; a fact perfectly consistent with the holiness of his character, and *with the principles of moral agency.*”

By the last part of the sentence just cited, viz. “*consistent with the principles of moral agency,*” we are reminded of what purported to be the subject of discussion. But the chapter has been chiefly employed on the metaphysical argument in

* Sermon x. p. 235. I refer to a volume of sermons, by Dr. Emmons, printed at Wrentham, 1800.

† Sermon xii. p. 292.

support of *the fact of native depravity*, with scarcely an allusion before to its consistency with moral agency. Instead of this, the task, which Dr. Woods had assigned himself, was, to prove that native depravity, in the sense in which it is understood by the orthodox, and was explained and defended in his Letters to unitarians, is not inconsistent with moral agency, as he had himself defined it, viz. “A moral agent is one, who acts under a moral law, and is *justly* accountable for his conduct.”

He was required, then, to show, that a being, created with a nature wholly corrupt, inclined only to evil, and incapable of any good inclination or motion, until such inclination or motion is produced by an irresistible act of the spirit of God; incapable of being influenced by any good motive, so as to perform a single good action, until its nature is changed, which change can only be effected by the immediate agency of God, nothing that he can himself do having any tendency to produce the change, or to procure its being effected; that such a being is the proper subject of a law requiring perfect holiness, and exacting entire obedience under the penalty of the most awful punishments. He was thus to show, that a being may be *justly* required by its creator to do, what, in all the circumstances, in which it is placed, it is impossible for it to do; and that it will be just in him to punish it with everlasting misery for not doing it. I say, *what it is impossible for it to do*, because Dr. Woods has laboured abundantly to show the extreme absurdity of supposing any thing

good to proceed from a corrupt nature ; “ and that a wrong disposition, and sinfulness of heart, is as evidently presupposed in every particular sinful act, as the principle of gravitation is presupposed in every instance of a stone falling to the earth.” Whether this has been done in a satisfactory manner, and agreeably to those principles of justice, which we apply in other cases, the reader will now judge.

The notice, which I have had occasion to take in this letter, of passages and sentiments which seem not to be very reconcileable with each other, might justify me in reciprocating the sympathy so often and so tenderly expressed by Dr. Woods. I cannot, however, apply to him the remark, which he has applied to myself—“ It is a little remarkable, that in a free investigation &c. he should let fall expressions so contrary to his own theory, and so consonant to ours.” So far am I from thinking it remarkable that some such contradictions, as I have pointed out, should occur, that I think him entitled to great credit for the dexterity with which he has managed to avoid them as far as he has done. That so much of irreconcilable contradiction appears, is to be attributed, not to any want of acuteness or of care in the writer, but to a radical defect in the system. Whoever undertakes to support a system in violation of nature and truth, nature and truth will be avenged on him, by requiring him to entangle himself in absurdities and contradiction, and to adopt language, that is plainly at war with the doctrine, which he wishes to support.

LETTER VI.

Unfounded charge noticed. Equivocal use of words. Difference between human nature and individual personal character. Exceptionable manner of conducting the discussion. What it is to follow nature.

IN the beginning of Chapter VIth, I am charged by Dr. Woods with having wholly neglected his reasoning upon several passages of scripture in his Vth Letter to unitarians, and with having satisfied myself with repeating the objection, which he had there endeavoured to answer. It was certainly not my intention to pass over any argument unnoticed, on which any reliance was placed ; nor am I aware of having done it. Whether I have or not, in the present instance, it will be in your power to judge, by comparing the passage referred to in Dr. Woods' Vth Letter, with the whole of that part of my IIIId Letter, which relates to it. You will indeed find the objection, which he had undertaken to answer, repeated ; not, however, as is intimated, merely repeated, but accompanied with reasons for considering it as an objection, that still remains in full force.

I might be contented to rest the subject as it was there left ; but as it is brought into view again, I will pursue it further, in order to show, that what has now been added by Dr. Woods gives no better support to the doctrine, than what he had said before.

I first call your attention to the reasoning on pp. 115, 116, where you might not readily perceive, unless reminded of it, that the whole turns upon the equivocal use of the phrase *human nature*. It is there used, as if it were a phrase equivalent in its import to *human character*, which is assuming

the main point in dispute. The great question between us is, whether sinfulness is a natural or an acquired state,—a character which is born with us, or formed in us afterward. Is there no account to be given of that variety, which appears in the characters of men, but by attributing it “to the different circumstances in which they are placed, and the different combination of causes under which they act, or resorting to the supposition of a corresponding difference of original character?” I expect to be able, in its proper place, to show, that there is another alternative; and that beings alike by nature, and placed in similar circumstances, as to all that is external to them, may yet have an inherent principle of activity, in the free exercise of which, all that variety of moral character may be formed, which appears in the great human family. The question here is not, whether human nature is *the same* in all, or as different as the different characters of men; but *what* it is,—whether totally inclined to evil,* or originally free from any greater inclination to evil than to good. The latter is what we maintain; and we account for the variety of character which soon appears, not by recurring to an original corresponding difference of nature, nor by the supposition of a necessary influence of external circumstances, nor yet by that of the direct and immediate operation of the spirit of God; but by a principle of intellectual and moral activity in men, in the free exercise of which, with different degrees of attention, in circumstances in all other respects similar, they take different directions, and arrive at

all that diversity, which we see in the world. We are not obliged, therefore, to suppose, that "Pharaoh, Jeroboam, and Judas had originally a moral nature as much worse than Moses, David, and Paul, as their ultimate characters were worse." That their ultimate characters differed so widely, is to be attributed to a difference in the use or neglect of their several intellectual and moral faculties, and of the circumstances in which they were placed, in which use or neglect they were voluntary, active, and free. Their nature, as moral beings, *was originally the same*. Their nature as intellectual beings *may, or may not have been the same*. Probably it was not. Their circumstances, as respects the temptations to which they were exposed, and the motives of conduct, which were offered to their minds, *may* have been the same, although probably they were not in reality; and yet the moral liberty which each possessed, the power of attending or not attending, of choosing or refusing, of giving any direction to his activity, at every moment, in every stage of his being, under every circumstance of action, may have resulted in the entirely opposite moral characters, which they exhibited at last. With this view of the subject you will be able to make a just estimate of the force of the singular reply to the question I had proposed, by way of appeal from the opinion which Dr. Woods had before expressed, "Whether Pharaoh, Jeroboam, and Judas were, as he had declared, fair examples and representations of human nature." His reply is, "Yes, for had they any nature but the

human? If they were not examples of human nature, of what nature were they examples? Of some nature above or below it?" Dr. Woods should have perceived, that in the whole of this passage, and what is connected with it, he is involving himself and his reader in a mist, by confounding human nature with human character, and the nature of an individual with his acquired character. In all that was essential to constitute them human beings, that is, in all the common properties of man, Pharaoh, Jeroboam, and Judas were undoubtedly fair examples of human nature; but not in any thing, which belonged to their distinct personal character. With no more propriety can the unprincipled selfishness of Judas be mentioned, as a characteristic of human nature, than any peculiarity in the form of his body or the features of his countenance, by which he was personally distinguished. I might with as much propriety mention Moses, David and Paul, as examples and representatives of human nature; for, so far as moral character is in question, we have no more evidence, that they owed theirs to the special influence of the spirit of God, than that the others owed their opposite characters to a special influence. There is the same reason for believing, that in becoming pious, holy, and virtuous, they were acting according to the nature God had given them, as that the others were so in becoming impious and unholy. The character of each of them, as moral or immoral, holy or sinful, depends on the fact, that he acted freely, and that the result was the effect of his own free and voluntary agency.

But I repeat, that the individual and distinctive character of neither of them is to be considered, as a representative of human nature. They are examples of human nature only so far, as respects what they are in common with all men. And this extends not to their individual character, but is confined to faculties, passions, and affections, which exist alike in all.

You will be able also to estimate the real value of the strain of popular eloquence, which runs through some following pages, and is employed in a lively description of the manner, in which the sentiments I had expressed must affect the use and application of historical facts and descriptions, as lessons of general instruction. Nothing is more easy, than thus to turn an adversary's argument or opinion into ridicule by a broad caricature. And I know not how the ridicule can in any case be more fairly repelled, than by showing, how a similar strain of irony and sarcasm may be applied to the opposite sentiment on the same subject.

The occasion of the passage, to which I refer, was my maintaining in opposition to an assertion of Dr. Woods, that men of the most wicked and abandoned character are not to be considered as fair representatives of human nature. The reasons are, in the first place, that they are exceptions from the general character of men, rather than examples of it; and in the next, that their wickedness is no part of that nature, which they have in common with all; but what they have acquired, and by which, as being personal to them, they have become

distinguished from all the rest of their race. The position maintained by Dr. Woods in opposition to this, converts the whole race of men in all ages, and of every region of the earth, into one undistinguished mass of corruption and wickedness.

Now, if this be the true account of human nature, how false, I might say, following the strain, and imitating the spirit of Dr. Woods, have been our ideas of the characters and actions of men! and what injustice have we done them! We have been used to think with great abhorrence of the character of Cain, and to reprobate the envious and cruel spirit, by which he was actuated. But with how little reason! His character is but a fair representation of every man's, that lives. There is no man on earth, who would not have murdered his brother, in the same circumstances. There was no peculiar envy and malignity in him. Had Abel been placed in his situation and he in Abel's, he would have been the martyr and Abel the murderer. It was a great piece of inadvertency at least in the apostle John, and shows how imperfect a knowledge he had of the true doctrine respecting human nature, to single him out, as he has done, as a remarkable example of envy and cruelty.

How strangely, again, have we been accustomed to misconceive, and how deeply have we in our thoughts wronged the characters of the unfortunate sufferers in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah! There is not the slightest reason for supposing, that they were more wicked, than any other men, who have lived at any other place, in any period of the

world. Every man in the world, unless his nature has been totally changed from what it was, as he received it from the hand of the Creator, is as bad as the worst of them, and is ready to commit the same crimes. That Lot himself was exempted from the general destruction was not because he was any better than his neighbours. It was not on account of any thing God saw in him, that he was distinguished from them. He was selected by an act of sovereign grace from the midst of a society, all of whom were equally sinful, equally unworthy of favour, and equally deserving of punishment.

How unreasonable and unjust also have we been, in attributing uncommon degrees of depravity to those men, whose violence and tyranny have filled the world with misery, and whose pride, and ambition, and selfishness have brought ruin and desolation upon the nations of the earth. The Pharaohs, the Jeroboams, and the Neros ought to excite in us no peculiar feelings of disapprobation. They were no worse, than the very best of those, whom they oppressed and destroyed. David and Josiah, pious and conscientious as we have thought them, in their situation would have been as impious and as cruel; and as great oppressors and destroyers of mankind.

Let us have a care, too, how we allow ourselves to think and to speak of those unfortunate men, who, by our sanguinary laws, are consigned to imprisonment or the gallows for their crimes against society, such as murder, or robbery, or piracy; as if they were any worse than others; as if he, who yesterday expired on the gallows for the twentieth

robbery or murder he had committed, was any worse, in a moral point of view, than the victims of his relentless fury, the jury by whom he was convicted, the judge, who pronounced his condemnation, or any one of the legislators, who framed the law, under which he suffered. Alas! the history of those wretches informs us, (p. 125) “not only what was in those particular men, but what is in human nature,—what is in your nature and mine.” In the last robber that was executed, every man may see an exact picture of himself.

There are exceptions, indeed, of persons, who have experienced a saving influence of the spirit of God upon their hearts, by which they are become holy, and are unlike and separated from the rest of the world. But they are few, and scarcely requiring to be mentioned or reckoned in the account. At the time of the deluge, it consisted only of eight persons—Noah and his family, out of the whole population of the world. All the rest were entirely and incurably wicked. But great and universal as the corruption of the world was, (p. 114) “we have no reason to think it greater at that time, than at any subsequent period, whether we consider the description of their character, the judgments of heaven they suffered, or the circumstances of their case.” The wickedness of the world then, was a fair example of what it is always. In the destruction of Sodom, also, three righteous persons were saved. These formed the only exception to the most abandoned profligacy and corruption of manners. But we greatly mistake and wrong their

character, if we think that the Sodomites were by any means peculiarly wicked. They were but a fair representation of the character of mankind in every age, and in every country. The mass of that population resembled exactly, in a moral view, the mass of the population in every other age and country,—the most enlightened, refined, and pure. We deceive ourselves, if we imagine, that our neighbours and friends, and the society by which we are surrounded, are any better than those of Noah and Lot. Their thoughts, inclinations, and purposes, are as entirely bent on evil, as were those of the antediluvians or the Sodomites. They need only to be placed in similar circumstances in order to be guilty of the same atrocities, which brought down the vengeance of heaven upon them.

And with respect to the few exceptions there are to this universal depravity, into what mistakes have we fallen! By a strange neglect of the true meaning of the bible, and design of the gospel, we have been led to suppose, that he, “who fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him;” and wherever we have met with men, who seemed to be pious, humble, conscientious, faithful in the discharge of the duties they owe to God and man, whatever speculative opinions they might hold, we have considered them as entitled to our charity and good opinion. But with how little reason! It is not what men do, but what they believe; not the purity of their life, but the soundness of their faith, that will make them acceptable to God, and entitle them to the fellowship and good opinion of christians.

Now the true faith, by which the orthodox christian is distinguished, is the belief, that all men are by nature totally depraved, enemies to God, inclined only to evil, incapable of any good till regenerated by an influence, in which they have no agency and no choice ; that a part of mankind were from eternity elected to everlasting life ; that an atonement was made for those thus elected, without which their sins could not have been forgiven ; that they are made holy by the irresistible grace of God, and that all the rest of mankind are left to perish, that influence being withheld, without which it was impossible for them to become holy and be saved. And as this is the true christian faith, how absurd to imagine, that any one can be a christian, who does not hold it ! Those only who do hold it are brought out of darkness, and have received the true and saving light. They are separated from the rest, and like the families of Noah and Lot, in their times, constitute the only exception to the universal depravity. The rest, however sincere they may be in their endeavours, and faithful in their exertions, however amiable in their dispositions and blameless in their lives, yet being unsound in their faith, are not to be distinguished from the corrupt mass ; since with all their shining virtues they have no just title to the christian name, and if not to the *name*, surely not to the *privileges*, *blessings* and *hopes* of christians, holding as they do another gospel.

I hope the reader will not mistake me, by supposing that I have meant the few last pages to be taken for serious argument. It is with reluctance that I have allowed myself so far to violate the

decorum I had intended to observe, as to adopt a strain of levity, which may be thought not perfectly becoming the gravity of the subject, and which can give very little satisfaction to the serious mind. I have resorted to it only to show of how little avail that can be on either side of a subject, which may so easily be turned to the other.

I had asked,* “Why the cruelty and obstinacy of Pharaoh, rather than the meekness and humanity of Moses; why the idolatry, and unprincipled ambition, and selfishness of Jeroboam, rather than the piety, tenderness of conscience, and public spirit of Josiah; why the single wretch who was so base and sordid as to sell and betray his master, rather than the eleven, who were true and faithful to him, should be selected as specimens of the race to which they belong, and the great community, of which they make a part.” To this Dr. Woods replies, (p. 127) “that all these vices and iniquities are the natural spontaneous growth of human nature. They are what the apostle calls the fruits of the flesh; of that flesh, which, according to John iii. 6. belongs to us by our natural birth; while the virtues enumerated, are the fruits of the spirit, or the effects of that divine influence, by which men are delivered from their natural character, and made new creatures,” &c. This answer, as I shall endeavour to show, is grounded on a misunderstanding of the phraseology of scripture in the passages referred to, and others, in which the same terms are employed in a similar manner.

* Letters to Trinitarians &c. p. 38.

By attending to the use of the terms *flesh* and *spirit*, and the phrases, *works of the flesh* and *works of the spirit*, *carnal* and *fleshly mind*, and *spiritual mind*, *carnal mindedness* or the *minding of the flesh*, and *spiritual mindedness* or the *minding of the spirit*, as these several forms of expression, and others of similar import occur in the New Testament, it will be found, that they are employed not to distinguish what is natural to man from what is not; but to distinguish one part of the nature and constitution of man from another part. Both of them are equally natural. There is a fleshly and a spiritual part in the human constitution, each of them equally a part of his nature, and recognized as such in the sacred writings. The one expresses his animal, the other his intellectual and moral nature. The former consists of the passions and appetites, which, ill directed and improperly indulged, lead into all sin; and the latter of reason and conscience, which lead to holiness and virtue. The actual personal character of each man depends on his following either of these opposite parts of his nature. He is accordingly a bad or a good man, holy or sinful; not in proportion as he *has* that, which constitutes his animal, or intellectual and moral nature; but as he *suffers himself to be guided and controlled* by the one or the other. The sinner is not one who has by nature more than others of that principle, from which all corruption and wickedness proceeds; but who suffers himself to be led by it, and enslaved. The good or holy man, on the other hand, is not one, who has less by nature of the animal prin-

ciple, than others ; but who prefers, and follows the spiritual part. Thus the sinner is justly blamed, and blames himself, not for what he is by nature, but for what he has rendered himself by the abuse and perversion of nature ; and the good man is approved, and enjoys self-approbation in the consciousness of having resisted the influence of the fleshly, and obeyed the spiritual part of his nature.

There is accordingly no more propriety in speaking of sinners, as being in a state of nature, than in saying that holy men are in a state of nature. He who follows after holiness and righteousness as truly follows nature, as he who indulges the sinful affections. It is only the lower part of our nature that leads to sin ; the higher leads to goodness and virtue. The flesh, which prompts us to disobey God, is no more a part of our nature, than the spirit, which prompts us to obey him ; the passions and appetites, which war against the soul, than reason and conscience, which exalt and perfect it, and bring it to some resemblance of the author of its being. I know not, indeed, how a sentiment could be uttered, more unworthy of the Author of nature, than to assert, that the constitution of his moral government and that of his moral creation are such, that the vicious man may be said to follow nature, and that the virtuous man does not ; that the former is to be regarded as a fair example of what human nature is, and what it leads to, and that the latter is not.

The truth is, and it is a most important one, that no man so truly follows nature, as he, who, submit-

ting to the guidance and control of the higher faculties and powers of his constitution, the intellectual and moral, obeys the God of nature, and rises to that elevation of virtue, to which those higher principles naturally conduct him. He, on the other hand, who rebels against reason, disregards the voice of conscience, and becomes a voluntary slave to the senses and passions, may, with much more propriety, be said to violate, than to follow nature.

Much of our language, and many of the forms of expression, which we apply to the good and bad conduct of men, is formed upon this idea. We speak of acts of cruelty, ingratitude, oppression, as *unnatural*, *inhuman*, that is, as what nature does not lead to nor approve, and what does not belong to the human character. A parent, for example, who manifests no love for his offspring, but treats it with neglect or unkindness, is regarded as *unnatural*. We think and speak of him as a monster; not as a specimen of human nature, but as an exception to it; and we accordingly apply to him, not the term *human*, but *inhuman*. The same epithets we universally apply to him, who treats with cruelty his slave or his beast. We regard him as having divested himself of the attributes of humanity, and thus justly forfeited its name and privileges. Nor is this use of language confined to positive acts. We apply it to any remarkable defect of the feelings of tenderness, sympathy and compassion; and we represent him as wanting in *humanity*, that is, in the peculiar attributes of

human nature, who can see the sufferings of his fellow beings without pity, and without a wish to relieve them. The crime which Cain committed, and those by which the Sodomites were distinguished, have been branded in all ages, and in all languages, with the epithet of *unnatural*. It is only in the language of orthodoxy, that they are honoured with a more flattering title, and one which implies their being acts of obedience to the law of their nature; and he, by whom they are practised, is allowed to have the consoling reflection, that his conduct is what nature teaches and prompts.

LETTER VII.

Charge of inconsistency considered. Propensity to sin implies no guilt. Guilt consists in yielding to it. Proper ground of blame or ill desert. Consistent with a constitution fitted to be wrought upon by temptation. Consistent with the divine foreknowledge.

IN the beginning of the VIIth Chapter occurs another instance, in which Dr. Woods indulges in his favourite mode of conducting the controversy, by endeavouring to show that his adversary is inconsistent with himself, in some of the expressions he has employed. With careless readers, who look no further than to perceive that there is a verbal contradiction in the passages, that are brought in comparison together; and never give themselves the trouble of examining the subject, so as to ascertain, whether the apparent contradiction be a real one, this will pass for a triumphant advantage in the argument; when a careful exam-

ination, would not only remove all appearance of inconsistency, by making it clear, that the meaning of the writer had been mistaken; but show also that although it were real, and as great as it is represented, it would be of no importance to the argument.

In the present instance, after stating the alleged inconsistency with his usual strength of colouring, he subjoins, with a commendable degree of tenderness, "I hope the reader will not attribute these contradictions to the fault of Dr. Ware's understanding."

The import of an expression of this kind is perfectly well understood, and I am far from complaining of it, as conveying an implication, that is not warranted by the usage of polemic writers; but it renders it necessary for me to restate the case, so that you may be able to judge correctly, whether it were the understanding of the writer, or that of the reader and commentator, that was, in this case, at fault.

The inconsistency, with which I am charged, is this, that having in several places in my Letters said, "that men do not possess by their birth that character of personal holiness, which is necessary to their being christians," I do yet (p. 47) affirm, "that those, who are now born into the world in christian lands are, as the Ephesians were after their conversion to christianity, *saved, quickened, fellow citizens of the saints.*"

Now, in order to make the passage last quoted inconsistent with the others, you will perceive, I

must be understood, as using the phrases, *saved, quickened, &c.* as expressing, that they were the subjects of *personal holiness*. I request you, therefore, to turn to the page referred to in my Letters. You will there find, that I was so far from using those phrases in the sense asserted, or in any equivocal or uncertain sense ; that I was direct and explicit in asserting the contrary. “ This language of the apostle,” I observed, p. 46, “ like much of that in the epistles, referring to the same subject, relates to men, *as bodies of men, not as individuals.*” And p. 47. “ The whole of this refers to the same thing ; *not to the personal condition of individuals as such, but to that of the whole body of christians—made to sit together in heavenly places, that is, to enjoy all the privileges and hopes of christians.*” The question here, as respects the charge of inconsistency, is not whether this is the true meaning of that passage of scripture ; but whether it was the meaning, in which it was used and applied by me. You will accordingly judge, whether, with so distinct an exposition of my meaning on the very page before him, Dr. Woods was justified in insisting, that I did use the phrases in question and apply them, as expressing personal holiness.

I cannot suppose any reply necessary, to the strain of irony and sarcasm, which, having been indulged through the VIth Chapter, prevailed in the author’s mind at the beginning of the VIIth. I think it sufficient to refer you to those parts of my Letters, which are alluded to, in order to your being able to judge of its justice.

The author says, (p. 135) "I hope Dr. Ware will reconsider what he has written respecting a propensity to sin, viz. that the propensity itself is no sin, and implies no guilt." I have reviewed the passage, and find no reason for changing the opinion, which I there expressed. The sentence, as it stands in the quotation, accompanied with Dr. Woods' comments, may seem to you exceptionable; but if you will turn to the passage in which it stands, and read it in connexion with that part of the paragraph, which precedes it, I am confident you will think it expresses the truth. I think it possible, indeed, that in this case, there is no real difference of opinion between us on the subject; and that the dispute relates only to the proper meaning of a word, and not to the correctness of an opinion. Dr. Woods and myself may annex different ideas to the word *propensity*.

In the sense in which I understand the word, the essence of sin does not "consist in propensity, inclination, or disposition to sin;" but in yielding to that propensity,—in following the inclination or disposition to sin. This may be illustrated by examples. A man has a strong propensity to any kind of excess. He becomes criminal only in proportion as he yields to it. If he does not yield to it, but preserves temperance and moderation, he is reckoned the more meritorious, in proportion to the strength of the propensity, which he has had the virtue to resist. But according to the principle maintained by Dr. Woods, he who feels a strong inclination to sin, though he resists it, is

more guilty than another, who, with less inclination, yields to it and commits the sin ; for “ the inclination is the essence of sin, and the only thing which makes any outward action or any volition sinful.” He, for example, who, with a strong propensity to intemperance, constantly restrains his appetite, is more faulty than his neighbour, who, with a less importunate appetite for the intoxicating draught, yet allows himself in habitual drunkenness. The man also, who, with great irritability of temper and strength of passion continually prompting him to acts of violence, yet holds himself under habitual restraint, and abstains from all deeds of violence, is, notwithstanding, upon the same principle, more criminal than another, who, of a cooler natural temperament, exercises no self-government, and allows himself in habitual peevishness, or cruelty, or violence in the common intercourse of life. A deliberate cold-blooded murder, also, may imply less guilt than a homicide committed under the immediate impulse of sudden passion ; and he who, at the call of false honour, coolly goes forth to dip his sword in the blood of his friend, incurs less guilt than he, who, under circumstances of extreme provocation, is excited to a high degree of resentment and wrath, yet, under the influence of conscience and the fear of God, is restrained from executing vengeance on the object of his resentment.

The fact is, that guilt or sinfulness consists not in temptation, but in yielding to it. This is as true of internal, as of external temptation. Now propen-

sity, inclination, or disposition to sin are nothing else, but internal temptations. They are no other, than modifications of the appetites, affections, and passions. But these, whatever be their strength, imply no guilt, until they are indulged in circumstances, in which virtue requires their restraint. Thus a strong appetite for intoxicating liquor constitutes a propensity to intemperance. But he, who, restraining such appetite, is habitually temperate, though the appetite remain in all its irritating force, is in a high degree meritorious. Where there is extreme irritability of temper, and quick sensibility to wrongs, there is always a strong disposition to revenge. But he who is withheld by the fear of God from yielding to those irritations, to which he is constitutionally subject, and religiously abstains from acts of revenge, is not only free from guilt, but is even intitled to higher praise, than another, who, with cooler passions, and less propensity to violence, requires a less vigorous exercise of the virtuous principle to preserve him from excess.

In the paragraph next succeeding that, which gave occasion to the last remarks, I am happy to acknowledge my obligations to Dr. Woods for setting me right respecting the opinion of Calvinists, as to the design and tendency of divine punishments. I am glad to be informed, that a sentiment, which I have sometimes heard expressed, and which, indeed, seemed to me to make a necessary part of the Calvinistic system, is generally disavowed by the orthodox; and that they do "consider the

punishments of this life as disciplinary—as having a real tendency to reform the wicked,—a tendency which, in many cases, is effectual.”

But in the latter part of the same paragraph there occurs a singular misrepresentation of the sentiment I had expressed. It is said, p. 136, “We cannot accede to Dr. Ware’s notion, that *disciplinary* punishment may be inflicted by a righteous and benevolent God, without real ill desert in those who suffer.” Now, by turning to pp. 48 and 49 of my Letters, you will perceive, that instead of *asserting*, I expressly *deny that there can be any just punishment, where there is no ill desert*. In the passage (p. 50) upon which I suppose the charge must have been founded, you will see that I was reasoning on the principles of my opponent, and upon those principles, my express assertion was, that “suffering could not be inflicted by a just being *as punishment*.” I admitted, that suffering might be brought upon beings, who had incurred no moral guilt, *by way of discipline*. Whether the term *discipline* was used with perfect propriety, is another question. But explained as it there is, there was no room for the most careless reader to mistake the sense, in which it was used. What was the *sentiment*, that I meant to express, there could be no doubt; whatever doubt might be raised, as to the propriety of the term, by which it was expressed. But it is with the *sentiment* that I am charged, a sentiment explicitly disavowed by me in the very terms, in which the charge is expressed and on the page referred to.

With respect to the use which I make of the term *discipline*, as distinguished from punishment, I suppose it to be authorized by common usage. The term is applied in numerous cases, where it has no reference to punishment, and where no ill desert is implied. It is applied to all the means that are used in an army to produce military order, and to form the habits of the soldier. To all that is done in a place of education in forming the intellectual habits of the scholar,—strengthening his faculties, and correcting his judgment and taste. We apply the term *discipline* to all those restrictions, which a man imposes upon himself, his child, or his pupil, for the purpose of forming a useful habit, or correcting one that is hurtful, where ill desert and punishment make no part of the idea, and a moral effect no part of the purpose; but a physical effect or intellectual improvement only is intended. Dr. Woods has doubtless often subjected himself voluntarily to a severe discipline, where he was yet not conscious of deserving punishment. Why will he not then allow me the privilege of supposing a discipline employed to effect some good purpose, where there was no ill desert, and where punishment could not be inflicted with justice? At any rate, whether the distinction which I make between *discipline* and *punishment* be admitted to be correct or not, I must claim the right of having my words understood and interpreted in the sense in which I expressly declare that they are used by me.

At the close of this Chapter, the defence of the doctrine of depravity is placed upon a new ground,

viz. that it involves no greater difficulty, as respects the principle of the divine government, than the system which is opposed to it.

The difficulty charged upon the orthodox doctrine, which is intended to be removed upon this ground is, “that it ascribes human wickedness to the agency of God, and traces sin to that constitution, which was given us by our Maker.” Dr. Woods admits the difficulty in the terms in which it is stated ;* but alleges, that it is no greater, than is involved in the opposite system ; that is, that the opposite scheme, as really as the orthodox doctrine of native depravity, ascribes human wickedness to the agency of God. What he has said to prove this is what follows, viz. “Men’s falling into sin at any period of their life is a thing, as really to be ascribed to the operation of their Maker, or to the constitution he has given them, as *native* sinfulness. For suppose that a man, influenced by strong temptation, at any time, fall into sin. Who gave him a constitution of mind fitted to be wrought upon by temptation ? And who ordered things so, that he should be exposed to temptation, and to those particular temptations, which prevail to draw him into sin ? Did not God know the result beforehand ? Was it not a result which naturally flowed from causes, which God directed and controlled, operating upon a moral nature, which he created, and according to laws, which he established ? The

* Why he should call them *offensive* terms, however, at the same time, that he admits that they express the truth, and does not pretend that they express any thing more than the truth, I am unable to see.

question I would ask him to solve is, *how, in such a case, there can be any blame ?*”

The question here asked, I hold myself bound to answer, and further to show, that it does not admit of an answer equally satisfactory, on the other side. I expect to be able also to show, that the simple foreknowledge of the Deity does not invalidate the answer. The question is, “how a being can be blameable for actions performed with a constitution of mind, fitted to be wrought upon by temptation, with things so ordered, that he should be exposed to temptation, and to those particular temptations which prevail to draw him into sin; God at the same time knowing beforehand the result.” Or, as otherwise expressed, “How can there be any blame in a result, which naturally flowed from causes, which God directed and controlled, operating upon a moral nature, which he created, and according to laws, which he established?” The true answer is suggested in one of the terms, that is made use of in the statement of the question; viz. “causes operating on *a moral nature*.” To him, who is accustomed to reasoning on moral subjects and to distinguishing between *moral* and *physical* causes and effects; the answer suggested, I think, will be intelligible and satisfactory. It is by overlooking this consideration of *a moral nature* in man, and reasoning upon the subject, as if he were governed in his actions only by physical laws, that the discussion has been involved in so much difficulty and confusion.

The question may be resolved into the following distinct propositions, in which the difficulty is presented in its full force, viz. *A man falls into sin, under the influence of a strong temptation. It was God, who gave him a constitution of mind fitted to be wrought upon by temptation. It was God, who ordered things so, that he should be exposed to the temptation. And God knew beforehand what would be the result.* Let us now see, in which of the above propositions the difficulty lies.

It will not, I presume, be pretended, that any part of the difficulty lies in the first proposition taken separately. The simple fact, that sin was committed under the influence of temptation, I suppose, will by none be considered as taking away guilt, removing the ground of blame, or affecting in any way the reasonableness of his being held answerable in a moral view for his conduct.

But *God gave him that constitution of mind, by which he was fitted to be wrought upon by temptation.* I ask in what manner is the constitution of man fitted to be wrought upon? If the meaning is, *wrought upon by a physical necessity, and in a mechanical manner,* there is, indeed, no room for praise or blame, and no foundation for moral distinctions in character. But if a *moral influence* only is intended, it will be otherwise. What then is the constitution of the mind in question, upon which temptation is to operate?

We are adapted to a certain state of being, and fitted for a certain course of action by a corporeal and intellectual organization, consisting of

the senses, and the passions and affections, on the one hand; and reason, on the other, comprehending all the intellectual faculties. The senses, together with the several appetites, and also the passions and affections, being necessary parts of our nature, having each of them objects suited to them, and each in its original structure, purpose, and tendency, being directed to some good, must each, within certain limits in their exercise, be consistent with innocence and virtue.

But in order to answer their design, they all exist, in their natural state, with such a degree of strength, that they may become the instruments or occasion of evil instead of good, to ourselves or to others. They may thus produce effects contrary to their original design and natural tendency, by being directed to improper objects, or to suitable objects unseasonably or in an improper degree. Still, whatever evils were thus produced, and whatever disorders and disproportions were thus introduced into the system, no guilt could be incurred, and there would be no foundation for our being considered as proper subjects of blame, unless these parts of our constitution were connected in our make with other faculties, by which we should be rendered capable of perceiving the tendency and the moral character of our actions. Such faculties we have. To execute these offices, we have reason and conscience. By these, we are capable of knowing, within what limits the lower faculties may be followed, and when they are to be restrained; what are the bounds of right, and what

are the consequences of keeping within, or transgressing those bounds. We have thus not only a sense of interest connected with our course of conduct, but also a sense of duty and obligation; and we become the just subjects of praise or blame, according as we follow or neglect our light. This moral responsibility, however, supposes always a power of choice as well as a power of discernment, as to the tendency and the character of actions. It supposes, that appetite and passion are not irresistible. Were there no power of choosing between yielding to the impulse of sense and passion, and obeying the voice of reason and conscience, there would be no more room for praise or blame, as there could be no more just foundation for either, in good or ill desert, than in the clock obeying the weights or springs that are to direct its motions, or the ship following the combined action of sails and rudder, by which it is impelled and directed.

There is then a power, not belonging to any piece of mere mechanism, by which man is rendered an accountable being. The influences by which his actions are governed are of another kind, and operate by other laws, than those, by which physical effects and mechanical motion are produced. The appetites and passions on the one hand, and reason and conscience on the other, are not to be regarded merely as opposite powers operating against each other upon mechanical principles; so that if you know the exact force of each, you can calculate with certainty the effect that will be produced. There is yet further, (and it is this,

that makes the most important point of difference between physical and moral causes and effects;) another power to be taken into the account,—the agent, or being itself, who, being the subject of these influences, and acted upon by these opposite powers, is yet to be active himself in obeying the one and in resisting the other.

Now an agent implies a principle of activity,—a power of acting—not merely of being acted upon. It is not like a pivot, upon which opposite weights are balanced, and which can exert no power over the weights themselves. An intelligent agent possesses a power of modifying the influences of the several powers, on both sides, by which it is acted upon, in such a manner, that with the same constitution, as respects the strength of the appetites and passions, and the power of reason, and knowledge of right and wrong; and also in the same external circumstances of temptation, the course of conduct may not be the same. He has the power of choosing between different courses that are presented, and of yielding to the influence of either of two opposite motives, to the action of which he is exposed. The cause, therefore, of this difference is the moral power of the agent himself, or the power he has over the determinations of his own will. The same remarks apply to the next proposition also, viz. *It was God, who ordered things so, that he should be exposed to the temptation.*

We have here then arrived at what I consider as supplying a distinct answer to the question proposed. The sinner is to be blamed, and is con-

scious of deserving blame, though he acted under the influence of strong temptation, though God gave him a constitution of mind, fitted to be wrought upon by temptation, and though he ordered things so, that he should be exposed to the particular temptation, which prevailed to draw him into sin. He is conscious, I observe, of ill desert, because he is conscious of having been not only voluntary in the sinful act, but free ; that he had the liberty of choosing or not choosing the sinful act, and the power of actually using that liberty by directing his choice to either of the alternatives. He deserves blame for allowing the wrong motive to influence his conduct, when, as a free agent, it was in his power to submit to the influence of either the right or wrong one.

But can this be said with truth upon the opposite hypothesis ? According to the orthodox doctrine of depravity, the natural propensity or inclination to sin in man is irresistible, until his nature is changed by irresistible grace. The sinner, then, having no freedom of choice, and no power of resisting the force, by which he is impelled by natural inclination, there is no possibility of his acting otherwise, than he does act ; and this impossibility is not that, which consists merely in the *abstract certainty of the event*, which, as we shall by and by see, would not affect either his freedom or his accountability ; but on a supposed necessary connexion between an appointed constitution of things, and the effects that are to follow from it. By this scheme, the sins of men are certainly ascribed to the agency of God in a sense, in which they cannot be ascribed with any propriety,

according to that, which I have now explained ; and it is thus encumbered with a moral difficulty, from which that is free.

But it may be imagined, that the force of what has now been said is impaired, if not wholly destroyed by the consideration, that the result, i. e. the manner in which the sinner will act, *is known beforehand by God*. And it is accordingly objected, that if we admit, that the whole constitution of man, physical, intellectual, and moral, is the work of God ; that the circumstances of temptation, under which each individual is placed, are his appointment, extending to the particular temptations, which actually prevail to draw him into sin ; and finally, that what will be the result is also foreknown ; the difficulty of reconciling this with his being justly accountable for actions thus performed is as great, as upon the supposition, that he was created with a natural inclination to sin and sin only, over which he has no control, and which he has no power to change, nor can do any thing, which has any tendency to procure a change to be wrought in his nature.

But between these cases there is an obvious and important difference. In the one case, a *necessity* is supposed as real and as absolute, as physical force ; in the other, there may be, for any thing that is expressed or implied in the proposition, *no necessity at all*. On the contrary, the powers which we have stated as belonging to the moral nature of man, clearly imply, that *there is no such necessity*.

The foreknowledge of God implies the *abstract*

certainty of the event foreknown, and it implies nothing more. Simply considered, it has no relation to the means by which it is brought about, and does not imply any agency in it. God's foreknowledge of an event no more implies an agency of his, exerted in bringing it to pass, than our knowledge of its *present* existence implies our agency in it, or that we are the cause of it. Your knowledge, that I am now performing a right or wrong action, implies the certainty of the fact, but nothing more. Though it is obviously impossible for the fact not to be, which is thus known to exist, yet it is certain, that the knowledge of its existence implies nothing with respect to freedom or necessity in its performance. But it were as correct to say, that *your present certain knowledge* of the act I am performing gives you an agency in it, makes you chargeable with its guilt, if it be a criminal act, and relieves me from moral responsibility for it ; as to assert, that simply its being foreknown by God implies any such divine agency, as is not reconcilable with moral freedom ; or that the agent, on that account, ceases to be a proper subject of blame and of punishment.

There is another manner of viewing the subject, which may serve to illustrate it, and enable us to perceive more clearly, that the *abstract certainty* of a future event, which is implied in its being foreknown, does not infer its necessity, or any such divine agency in it, as to render the human agent less accountable. It is this ; that upon the supposition of that moral freedom, which I maintain to be

the true ground upon which man is justly accountable for his actions, deserving of praise or blame, and a proper subject of reward and punishment; every action of every human being is as certain, before it is performed, as afterward. Suppose men to have that liberty, which the scheme that I advocate attributes to them, it is as certain beforehand, how they will act, as upon the scheme of necessity; that is, it is absolutely certain how they will in fact use that freedom. And speaking of it merely as an abstract truth, we may say, it is impossible that they should not use their freedom as they actually will use it.

This is rendered clear and intelligible by considering any action or event as already past. The murder, which was perpetrated yesterday, upon the supposition, that the murderer acted with perfect moral freedom, was as certain the day before, as the day after the deed was done. The *certainty* was the same, as if he were impelled by a moral or even a physical necessity. And if the *necessity* were the same, he would be as blameless, as the dagger, with which he performed the deed. I admit the consistency, while I abhor the doctrine, (and shudder at its immoral tendency,) of those philosophers who assert, that upon the principle of necessity, it is as absurd to *blame*, in the common acceptation of the term *blame*, the assassin, as the dirk or pistol. Each was alike the necessary and the blameless instrument, and in no proper sense the agent, in no such sense as to be the reasonable subject of blame, or justly deserving of punishment.

In the just and important sentiment expressed with great strength and propriety by Dr. Woods in the concluding sentence of this chapter, I join with my whole soul. "The habit of attributing moral evil to God in such a way, as to destroy or diminish its criminality is, in my view, one of the worst habits, of which the human mind is capable. It produces alarming stupidity of conscience and hardness of heart, and leads to the most destructive fatalism."

It is under this impression, that I feel the importance of establishing and rendering intelligible the doctrine of moral freedom both in opposition to philosophical necessity, and to the theological doctrine of predestination; believing it to be, notwithstanding difficulties with which the subject is confessedly encumbered, the truth. I feel the more earnest on the subject, because, however some may be able to reconcile philosophical necessity with the doctrine, that man is accountable for his actions, it does certainly lead many, and to me it seems by a very natural and just process of reasoning, "to the most destructive fatalism." This tendency of the doctrine is not assigned as a reason for rejecting it, nor for believing in the truth of philosophical liberty. Our acceptance of either doctrine should stand on its own proper evidence. But it is a good reason for examining very faithfully the evidences of a doctrine, which, to say the least, is not readily seen to be reconcileable with a moral and accountable state; and for being willing to allow their due value to any considerations, which may be fairly urged in support of the opposite opinion.

LETTER VIII.

Practical importance of the question respecting depravity. Moral influence and tendency of the orthodox doctrine correctly stated by Dr. Woods. Moral tendency of the opposite doctrine. An incorrect representation of dangerous moral tendency noticed. Unitarian method of addressing men. Orthodox method.

THE discussion of the subject of native depravity is closed, in the VIIIth Chapter of the book before me, by an examination of its practical importance.

The practical importance of any doctrine is exactly commensurate with its practical tendency and influence. This is usually much exaggerated by polemic writers. Speculative opinions have generally far less influence upon the conduct of life, than those, who have employed much time and study upon them, as subjects of controversy, are ready to imagine. But as respects the present subject of discussion, I do not know, that the practical importance of the question has been overstated. We may certainly expect, that opposite doctrines, which relate to points, by which the motives of conduct are directly affected, will have a widely different influence upon practice. We can hardly imagine, that a visible difference of character should not be produced by the serious belief of the orthodox doctrine of human nature and the human condition, from that which is produced by the unitarian.

The tendency of the orthodox doctrine I suppose to be truly and correctly stated by Dr. Woods in the following passage. (p. 141) "Those who seriously believe themselves and others to be the subjects of a native and entire depravity, must be

convinced, that a mighty operation of divine power is necessary to make them holy. They must view it as indispensable; that they should be born again. Passing by human efforts, and all slight, common remedies, as totally inadequate, they must found every hope of moral purification on that energy of God, which gives men a new heart, and a new spirit,—which creates them in Christ Jesus unto good works.” The tendency here attributed to the doctrine, next to its want of evidence, constitutes, in my mind, the most insuperable objection to it. For it seems to me, that it must lead, on the one hand, to groundless expectations, and a false dependance, and on the other to the neglect of all moral exertion, and of the use of the proper means of recovery to holiness and the divine favor. For, to what course does the sinner find himself here directed? Not to any exertion to deliver himself from the bondage of sin, and save himself from the wrath to come. Not a syllable is said to encourage such exertion; but on the contrary, it is strongly implied, that all such exertion must be utterly useless and unavailing. The only hope he is allowed to entertain is *in a mighty operation of divine power, which is necessary to make him holy*. And how is he to become the subject of this mighty operation? Is there any thing, that he is directed to do, or has the power of doing, with the hope, that it will be the means of his obtaining it, or that it will be the reason or the occasion of its being granted to him? By no means. In granting or withholding it, God is sovereign and inde-

pendent, and has no respect to any thing, that he sees in the creature. No desert, and no effort of his, will make any part of the reason or cause, for which it is granted. It will be given to those, and to those only, who are, by an unconditional act of election, appointed to eternal life. Upon those, and only those, will that regenerating influence be shed, by which they are to be *born again, to have a new heart, and a new spirit given them, and to be created in Christ Jesus unto good works.* They are not directed,—they are not indeed permitted, to seek for this renovating influence, by which they are to be sanctified and saved, by prayer. For until they are renewed and sanctified by this influence from above, they cannot pray acceptably. Every prayer they utter as well, as every action they perform, is sinful,—an abomination to God, and must serve to sink them still deeper in guilt. There is accordingly, in the statement above, no intimation, that the sinner feels himself called upon or authorized by the orthodox faith, to use any means, or make any efforts to recover himself from a state of guilt, and rise to holiness and virtue. The contrary, indeed, is too distinctly implied to be misunderstood. *Passing by human efforts, it is said, as totally inadequate, he must found every hope of moral purification on that energy of God, which is to give him a new heart, and a new spirit.* His hope then, and the only hope he is encouraged to entertain, is, that this will be done for him, and wrought in him. But he has no encouragement to pray, that this

may be done for him. It would be inconsistent with a fundamental principle of the system, which supposes him, until that renovating and sanctifying influence has actually been given, inclined only to evil, wholly wrong in his moral affections and actions,—incapable therefore of a purpose, or wish, or prayer, that would be acceptable to God. To pray then for that mighty influence, which is to renew and sanctify him, is among *those human efforts, which he passes by*, in the same manner as he does all others, waiting for it to be exerted upon him independently of all such efforts.

I know that language very different from this was formerly held by Calvinistic divines. They directed sinners to pray, and called upon them to exert themselves, and to use the means of reformation. There are probably those, who do so now, not attending very accurately to its consistency with the speculative opinions they have adopted. Not so the author of the Reply. He understands too well what the system requires, to intimate, that the sinner has any thing to do, any effort to make, any prayer to offer, until this mighty influence has come upon him. *All human efforts are to be passed by, until this has taken place.*

In thus stating the practical tendency of the orthodox doctrine of depravity, our author cannot be suspected of exaggeration or misrepresentation. Yet in my apprehension it is a tendency of an extremely hurtful and immoral nature. Can it be otherwise, for wicked men to be allowed to think, that there is nothing for them to do, until some-

thing is done for them? that no effort is to be made, not even a prayer offered up by them, until they are conscious of being the subjects of that mighty energy of God, which is to give them a new heart and a new spirit? that the sinner should feel himself authorized to treat with neglect all the common influences of the spirit of God, as of no value, relying on a special influence, by which he is to be distinguished, and which cannot be resisted?

Let me request you to place in comparison with this the moral tendency and practical influence of the doctrine, which is directly opposite to it.

According to the system, the tendency and influence of which I wish you now to contemplate, the sinner is taught to regard his sinfulness, as consisting solely in his personal and acquired moral character. He considers himself as guilty before God, deserving of punishment, standing in need of mercy, and requiring to be renewed by repentance, and changed from sin to holiness; not by the constitution of his nature, but by his voluntary violation of the laws, which God had, in the constitution of his nature, imposed upon him. As the guilt of which he is conscious is only that, which he has brought upon himself by his own act or his own neglect, he believes, that his own act only can restore him; and that he is not to expect that to be done for him, which it is his duty to do for himself. He accordingly looks not for a mighty influence, which, without his desire, or will, or effort, is to change his nature. He believes, that God has already done all, that was necessary on his part;

and that nothing is now wanting, but for him to exert the strength which is given him, and to employ faithfully the means, which are put into his hands, to do something for himself. So far is he from thinking it his duty, *to pass by all human efforts*, and indolently or presumptuously wait for that to be done for him, which he is commanded to do for himself, that he considers his guilt as greatly enhanced, and the more inexcusable, by every moment's delay to make those efforts. He places in the fidelity of those efforts his *whole hope* of the favor and acceptance of God ; believing, that the consciousness of making those efforts will be the only reasonable ground he can have for expecting to become the subject of that change, which will secure them to him ; and that *to pass by* or neglect to make *those efforts*, is constantly to add to his guilt, to lessen the probability of his recovery, and to cut off the hope of final forgiveness and the acceptance and favor of heaven.

Instead of undervaluing what God has already done for him, as being of no use, unless something more be done ; instead of neglecting that common grace, which is bestowed upon all, and consists in the means and motives of religion, and waiting for that special grace, by which he is to be distinguished from others, and by which the great work is to be done for him and wrought in him ; he is grateful for the provisions God has made for his deliverance from the dominion of sin, and recovery to holiness and virtue ; he believes them to be sufficient for the purpose,—that nothing further is

needed, but for him to accept and use them ; that he shall be utterly inexcusable, if they fail to produce the intended effect ; and that it would be impious for him to expect further assistance, while he continued in the neglect of that, which is given. He accordingly believes, that his salvation depends upon the fidelity of his own exertions, and not upon any thing, that is to take place independent of them, to which no prayers nor efforts of his can contribute, and which no neglect nor resistance of his can prevent or counteract.

By comparing the state of mind, which has now been presented, with that, which we have before seen must be produced by the orthodox doctrine, you will be able to decide, which is likely to excite to the most earnest and faithful exertion, and thus to have the most favorable moral tendency, and to produce the greatest practical effects.

I request you, also, not to be satisfied with a mere cursory reading of what follows in the same paragraph, from which my last quotation was taken, p. 141. I am confident, that a close attention to the representation there given, will lead you to think it less sound and correct than it seemed to you at first. If, as in the passage referred to, men are told, that their “being distinguished by the most correct habits, by the most useful actions, and by the highest improvement of their rational powers and natural sensibilities,” is consistent with their being “in an unrenewed state,—finding in themselves that corruption of heart, which is the fountain of all iniquity ; and the utter want of that

holiness, without which no man can see the Lord ;” can it fail, if it have any practical effects, to weaken their sense of the value of good moral conduct, and to lower their estimate of the importance of a virtuous life ? There may be, no doubt, much of the external show of virtue, where there is nothing of the reality,—no good principle within, from which it proceeds ; and many good actions may be performed from bad or defective motives, and without any sense of religious or moral duty. But the quotation above expresses something quite different from this. There is a studied strength of language, and a universality of expression, which seems to comprehend all that belongs to good conduct, and good feeling. It is not, for instance, a few good actions, nor a single good habit ; but habits of right conduct generally, forming a character. But can we suppose, that a man, distinguished for the most correct habits, is yet utterly destitute of holiness ; that is, that he exhibits all the practical evidences of holiness, while he is influenced by no sense of duty, and has no principle of religious obedience ? Is it credible that one should *habitually perform the most useful actions*, and yet in all his actions be influenced by an *earthly, selfish, unholy disposition* ? And that, with his *rational powers and natural sensibilities in the highest state of improvement*, he has *that corruption of heart, which is the fountain of all iniquity* ? Or admit that all this might be the case in a single instance, is it credible that it should be a common thing ? What can be the tendency of such representations, but to dissolve in

men's minds the connexion between holiness of heart and a good life; and to lead them to regard that holiness, which constitutes a christian, as something distinct from a principle of religious obedience governing the conduct of life? Let it once be believed, that the best habits of life, and the most useful actions flowing from natural sensibility improved in the best manner, and under the direction of the most improved reason, are no marks of holiness; and we may soon expect it to be believed also, that the entire absence of these good habits, good actions, and good affections is to be regarded as no evidence of the want of holiness. Nor can it be doubted, that the effect is often answerable to what might be expected; that by representations so loosely made and carelessly expressed in general terms, an opinion has been produced, that there is at least but a very uncertain connexion between grace and good works; between holiness and a holy life. Such cannot, however, have been the design of Dr. Woods. Neither he nor any respectable orthodox divine can be supposed intentionally to inculcate such an opinion. But they are not sufficiently careful to guard against it.

In a remarkable passage (pp. 142—146) Dr. Woods has ventured to describe the manner, in which unitarian ministers ought, according to their principles, to address sinners; and he concludes by saying, "If I mistake not, the general conduct of those ministers, who hold the opinions of the book, to which I have undertaken a reply, corresponds substantially with the representation I

have made. Such, I am persuaded, would be my conduct, should I adopt those opinions.”

As the passage, which closes with what you have now read, is too long to be quoted entire, I request you to read it with attention, and to satisfy yourselves, whether the hard censure it contains of unitarian ministers generally, be justified. If it be so, it will appear in the general strain of their preaching. It will be seen making a prominent feature in their printed discourses. It will be avowed by them in their writings, as the practical tendency of their doctrine. If you find no such thing, but a very different spirit pervading their writings and a different course pursued; you will conclude, not that Dr. Woods has designedly misrepresented those ministers, of whose spirit, character, and conduct, he professes to be *exact* in giving an account, and anxious *not to discolor or exaggerate*; but that he took the shorter course (a very common one indeed, but of questionable propriety at least, in so grave a charge,) of judging what the conduct of unitarian ministers actually is, by what his own would be in their situation; *for such*, he says, *I am persuaded would be my conduct, should I adopt their opinions*. You have now then only to take a fair view of those opinions, (not as they may be gathered out of fragments of sentences, picked here and there out of a controversial writing—separated from their connexion, so as sometimes grossly to pervert, instead of expressing, what was the obvious meaning of the writer;) but you are to consider the system as a whole, in all its connexions, and tendencies, as its

doctrines are expressed, when professedly stated by its sober defenders. You will then be able to judge, whether or not the adoption of those opinions ought to lead one to such a course.

Dr. Woods, however, seems anxious to have it believed that he is perfectly sincere in averring, that such would be the influence of the unitarian doctrine on *his* conduct; for he soon repeats it, and in each case accompanies the assertion with an emphasis, intended to attract attention. *Upon me*, he repeats, *I am persuaded, the influence of the prevailing system of unitarians, would produce all the effects above described.* But I will do Dr. Woods a justice, which he is not willing to do himself. I am not only fully persuaded, but morally certain, that with the good sense, and moral feeling, and true piety which I cannot doubt Dr. Woods possesses, the belief of the unitarian system would produce far other effects, than those, which he has described. Did the few scraps, which he has quoted, contain *the whole of his faith*, such might be his conduct; and as many scraps, I doubt not, might be selected out of the creed of a sound Calvinist, which would leave him at liberty to pursue a similar course. But is Dr. Woods so little acquainted with the unitarian faith, as to believe, that those extracts contain the whole of it, or all that is practical in it? If he is, instead of indulging such a strain of levity and sarcasm upon a subject which he has not examined,—or of which he has overlooked essential parts,—and presuming that pious and faithful ministers actually do, what

he thinks he should do in the state of mind, in which he supposes them to be ; let him endeavour to ascertain what that state of mind actually is,—by taking into view, the great and leading doctrines, which they profess. Let him think, whether he should treat the hopes and fears, and everlasting interests of sinful, suffering, dying men, quite so lightly ; if he believed,—as he *might* know that unitarians do believe,—that they are destined to an immortal being after death, a state of righteous retribution, in which every one shall receive, in happiness or misery, according as his works shall have been ; that the present life is a state of discipline and probation, and that the effects of a right or wrong course of conduct in it, will be followed with consequences in a future life, both in degree and duration, important beyond our conception ; that during this state of trial we have the earnest and affectionate calls of our heavenly Father to that virtue and holiness, which will secure his favour ; that these calls are perfectly sincere, addressed to all, with which all have the power of complying, but which any one may resist ; none being precluded from the possibility of accepting the offer by a previous decree, nor by an irresistible necessity of nature ; and no one having his salvation insured by an absolute election, and an influence, in procuring which he has no agency ; that the salvation or condemnation of every one, therefore, is depending, in the most proper sense, upon himself ; depending upon the choice he shall make, and a choice which he has the power of making. That although all men were

created innocent,—all have become sinners,—all need repentance, all need forgiveness, all have reason for solicitude and watchfulness—all have temptations within and without, against which they must guard and strive. That we owe entire subjection to the will of God, and the entire devotion of all our faculties, and affections to his service; that it is then through the mercy of God only, revealed to us in the gospel, that we can hope, that any thing short of perfect unsinning obedience will be accepted to our salvation; that the salvation, therefore, of the best and holiest, is to be acknowledged as wholly an act of grace, and that this grace will be extended only to those, who are truly penitent, and faithful in their endeavours to possess true holiness.

If, with such views of the human condition, and of human duty and prospects, Dr. Woods could find in his heart to treat the subject in the manner that he represents, I can only say, his heart is very different from what I am willing to believe it; and should he still assert it, my charity would still compel me to judge better of him, than he does of himself, and to say that his assertion was not made with due deliberation.

But justice to my cause requires me, and I am sorry it does, to say something more respecting the representation which Dr. Woods has given of the course pursued by unitarian ministers. It consists, you perceive, in the application of several words, and parts of sentences, in my Letters, as Dr. Woods supposes I would apply them, in the several cases imagined.

Of the propriety and discreetness of such a mode of proceeding, you will be better able to judge, and so perhaps will Dr. Woods himself, by a similar method of proceeding on the other side. Following the example then, and adopting the manner, of my author, I ask, "What is the scheme of practical religion, with which the belief of innate depravity is associated? If I believe as a general truth, that all men are totally depraved, that is, if I believe them to be by nature, enemies of God, inclined only to evil, whose dispositions and affections are wholly wrong, I must treat them accordingly. I must hate them, and treat them as enemies; for it is my duty to hate, what God hates, and to be the enemy of his enemies. If I see in any of them, what seems to me to be amiable traits of character, such as kindness, justice, love of truth, I must beware how I allow myself to be seduced into any good opinion of them, or kind feelings toward them; for all this, and even the best habits of life, and most useful actions, flowing from the kindest sensibilities and under the direction of cultivated reason, may flow from a heart that is evil only. If I address sinners either in public or private, I may apply to each individual what is said of the worst enemies of God, of man, and of religion,—of Pharaoh, of Jeroboam, and of Judas, that he is a thief, a murderer, and a betrayer of innocent blood. I may represent his condition, too, as most awful and wretched and hopeless, while he remains so. But I must not so far forget myself, as to exhort him to repentance, for this would imply that he could

repent. I must not encourage him to inquire, what he shall do to be saved, for he can do nothing. I must not suffer him to hope for any benefit, though he seek, and strive, and pray for a new heart and a new spirit; because God will grant this only to those, who are elected to eternal life, and that election, which ensures the salvation of those, who are the subjects of it, is wholly without reference to any thing, that they can do to deserve or to procure it; so that those, who are elected, will have this renewing and saving influence, whether they pray or not; and to those, who are not elected, it will be denied, however earnestly they may seek, and pray, and strive. I shall say then to the wicked, there is no reason why you should afflict yourselves, or deny yourselves any of the pleasures of sin; for you are as likely to become the subjects of regenerating grace in the haunts of profligacy and vice, in the act of theft or perjury, or murder; as in a church, in the midst of domestic duties, or in the act of prayer, or in performing the most useful and virtuous deed.

If any one, anxious and distressed under a sense of guilt, were disposed to break off from the habits of sin, and to practise temperance, truth, and righteousness, and to perform the duties, which he has neglected, with the hope that such efforts will be pleasing to God; I should say, beware how you presume thus to take God's work out of his own hands. He only by his irresistible grace can renew your heart, and till he has done it, all your desires, and efforts, and thoughts, and actions are

but adding to your sin; and such efforts will increase in a peculiar manner, your danger, because they have a tendency to make you rely on your own works. You had better, therefore, abstain from them. It is safer for you not to perform any good works, than to place any dependence on them, or to think them of any value. To both, saints and sinners, I ought to say, in order to relieve them from needless labour and useless solicitude; your cares and exertions to regulate your temper and lives are ill placed and wholly useless. For if you are not elected to eternal life, nothing that you can do will have any tendency to promote your salvation, so that it is clearly your interest to sin with as little fear, as little restraint, and as little remorse as possible; since it can add nothing to your future doom. You are by nature *totally* wicked, and you cannot make yourself more so.

If, on the other hand, you are elected to eternal life, your final salvation is sure to you without your exertions; for the eternal purposes of God cannot be frustrated. And besides, the whole work of salvation is wrought for those, who are to be saved. Whatever they may do, it can be of no use to them, as respects the forgiveness of sin and their final salvation. *For we must rely on the atoning blood of the Son of God as the sole ground of the forgiveness of sin; and for no purpose,—certainly not in any connexion with our salvation,—must any works of righteousness, or any accomplishments or dispositions we possess, be ever named in his presence*

Had I, in my answer to Letters addressed to Unitarians, indulged myself in such a representation, many Unitarians and some Calvinists would have assented to it, as a just account. But from the author of those Letters it would probably have drawn forth epithets like those, which he bestows upon a passage from Wesley in another case (p. 174)—he would have so far forgotten his usual tone of moderation and urbanity, as to call it, *a strain of violent misrepresentation, scurrility, and outrage.*

For although all the consequences inferred above have been admitted by those, who maintained the fundamental doctrines of Calvinism, and their preaching has actually been of that tenor and tendency; and although I am unable to perceive, that any violence is offered in drawing these consequences; yet, not believing that Dr. Woods, or the orthodox generally, do actually use such a mode of address, I should have been justly liable to severe rebuke, had I asserted, *that the conduct of orthodox ministers generally corresponds with the representations which I have given.* Dr. Woods, however, is not liable to the same rebuke, because he believes, that such as he stated is the conduct of ministers, who hold the opinions contained in the Letters addressed to Trinitarians and Calvinists. I only ask him to recollect again what are the grounds of that belief.

LETTER IX.

ELECTION. Statement of the doctrine by Dr. Channing defended. Charge against Wesley considered. Dr. Woods' reasoning examined. Distinctions between Foreknowledge and Predetermination—between physical and moral events—between certainty and necessity. Cases of Paul and Mary Magdalene. Appointment to means and privileges—not to holiness and salvation. Inconclusive reasoning, and inconsistency. Another instance. Doctrine of Election and Philosophical necessity entirely distinct.

I AM quite unable to perceive, why, in the beginning of the IXth Chapter, Dr. Woods should refer, with the sensibility he expresses, to what Dr. Channing had said in relation to the doctrine of election in the sermon, which was the occasion of these discussions. That the glowing eloquence, and force of language, with which he expresses his feelings in regard to the doctrine, should give pain to one, who believes it to be the truth of the gospel, I can easily conceive ; but that is a very different thing from being chargeable with giving a false account of the doctrine itself. It is nothing more than expressing, in strong terms, his opinion as to the character of the doctrine.

Turning to the passage in the sermon, which I presume was referred to, I see not with what propriety it can be said, that the orthodox *do not maintain the opinions* there stated, and that *the charges there contained are untrue*. The offensive statement of the doctrine, is the following.* “ This system also teaches, that God selects from the corrupt mass of men a number to be saved, and

* Dr. Channing's Sermon, 2d. edit. p. 30.

that they are plucked by an irresistible agency from the common ruin, whilst the rest are commanded under penalty of aggravated woe to make a change in their characters, which their natural corruption places beyond their power, and are also promised pardon on conditions, which necessarily avail them nothing unless they are favoured with a special operation of God's grace, which he is pre-determined to withhold."

I ask you to what part of this statement Dr. Woods can object as untrue? Not to that which says, "that God selects from the corrupt mass of men a number to be saved,"—for this is the very essence of the doctrine,—*that a number, a certain definite number, is chosen from among mankind; so certain and definite, that it can neither be increased nor diminished.* Not that those thus selected are "plucked by an irresistible agency from the common ruin." For the necessity of regeneration, and that it is *effected solely by a mighty energy of God*, which the sinner can do nothing to procure, and the efficacy of which he cannot prevent; is a part of the system, which no one, pretending to orthodoxy, will call in question. Is it then, "that the rest are commanded under penalty of aggravated woe, to make a change in their characters, which their natural corruption places beyond their power?" But you will surely not deny, that all the commands of the gospel to repentance, holiness, newness of life, are addressed to the wicked, i. e. to those, who need to repent, to be renewed, and to become holy; nor will you deny, that upon the

principles of orthodoxy, such is their natural corruption, that it is not in the power of any one to obey the command, without an influence exerted upon him, which he can do nothing to procure. The false charge then must consist in saying, *that they are promised pardon on conditions, which necessarily avail them nothing, unless they are favored with a special operation of God's grace, which he is predetermined to withhold.* You must then say, either that the conditions of pardon can be complied with without a special operation of divine grace, or that the sinner can do something to procure this special operation; or that the election to salvation is not so certain, but that one, who is not elected, may yet possibly have that renovating influence exerted upon him, by which he may be enabled to comply with the conditions of pardon.

There is a passage also quoted, with a similar complaint, from the writings of John Wesley. But it seems to me with as little reason. Dr. Woods, however, thinks, that human ingenuity could not make a representation of the doctrine, *more uncandid, distorted, or false.* These are strong expressions, and arrest our attention to the grounds of the charge. *The sum of all*, says Wesley, *is this;—one in twenty (suppose) of mankind, are elected; nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will; the reprobate shall be damned do what they can.* There is in the form of expression here an air of flippancy, which one does not wish to see used on serious subjects; but I do not perceive, to what part of the statement

a Calvinist can object, as giving a false view of the doctrine. *The elect shall be saved, do what they will.* Will you say, that any one of the elect ever will do, what will cut him off from salvation? Is not the decree of election certain? Can the purpose of God in it be frustrated by the will of the creature? Suppose he be guilty of all manner of crimes, and even after he has been regenerated by the grace of God, relapse into the most wicked course of life; is it not yet absolutely certain, that he will be finally saved? On the other hand, the reprobate shall be damned, *do what they can.* Will you say that any one of the nonelect, upon the principles of orthodoxy, *can* do any thing, by which he can obtain salvation? If he can, then he can frustrate the purpose of God in election. Then he can oblige God to do, what he had determined not to do. To say that one, not elected to salvation, can do any thing by which he may obtain eternal life, is to say, that the purpose of God is not immutable, and to reduce it to that state of contingency, which orthodoxy abhors. I presume it cannot be merely the proportion, *one in twenty*, which gives offence. If the *principle* in the statement be correct, whether the proportion be one in twenty, one in twenty thousand, or twenty thousand to one, will be of little consequence. This, however, we have some reason to think, was actually Dr. Woods' ground of objection to the statement, from what occurs, p. 156. It is "a manifest error," he says, "to state the doctrine thus," viz. that the doctrine of election implies, that only a small part of

mankind are chosen to salvation ; “ and any one who justifies the representations often made of our doctrine in this respect, justifies what may justly be called *religious calumny*. ”

But I am reminded here to ask, if the orthodox really hold the opinions they profess to do, in the common meaning of the terms, in which they are expressed in their creeds and writings, why do they manifest such strong sensibility and complain so loudly of being misrepresented, whenever other language is used in reference to them, which expresses no more, than what is necessarily implied, or clearly follows from the terms they actually make use of. Can we want better evidence than this,—that the language, in which they are expressed, is used in some technical sense, and not in its common acceptation ? Is it not rendered probable, that in the use of the terms, *native depravity*, *election*, *atonement*, and *divine influence*, some technical meaning is concealed, as different from their common meaning, as used in other cases,—as the term *person* is, as applied to the doctrine of the Trinity ?

In *that* case, as we are now informed, the term *person* does not mean, what it does in all other cases,—does not mean any thing intelligible, any thing that can be defined, or be so expressed, as to convey any distinct idea, by other words. If the same is true, as the circumstance I have mentioned renders probable, as to the other orthodox terms, there may be less real difference of opinion than is imagined ; it may consist more in words

and technical phraseology, which has no definite meaning, than in real opinion. I am led the more readily to think this to be the case from another fact; viz. that Episcopalians generally understand the strong Calvinistic language of their articles in a very different sense from that, which it conveys in its obvious meaning. So that with articles apparently expressing the same faith with the Westminster confession; that which they profess, in intelligible language, is widely different.

I proceed now to the elaborate and ingenious defence of the doctrine, which follows; and will endeavour to point out to you, wherein the defect of the reasoning, and the fallacy in the conclusions, consist. I observe, in the first place, that the whole reasoning proceeds upon the assumption of the doctrine, which is to be proved; and it leads to false conclusions by constantly confounding together terms, which have different meanings. I may admit, as is stated (p. 151,) *That God had an eternal purpose respecting human salvation,—that the purpose of God corresponds with what actually takes place,—that is, God's purposes respecting man's salvation correspond with his administration.* But I enter my objection, when it is added (p. 152) in order to lay a broader basis for some following conclusions,—*that there can be no unforeseen occurrence,—no event not predetermined.* Here terms of very different import are confounded together as if they were synonymous. I admit that *no unforeseen occurrence can take place*; but does it hence follow, that *no event not predetermined* can take

place? That may be *foreseen*, respecting which there is no *predetermination*. God may foresee how I will act, without having determined that I shall so act.

This assumes again one of the important points at issue, i. e. that the foreknowledge of an event *implies*, that it is decreed. It also goes on the assumption, that the foreknowledge of God is inconsistent with free agency. For, in whatever it is predetermined, that the agent shall do, he can have no liberty of choice. He can only choose, what it is decreed he shall choose. But it has not been shown, and I think it cannot be shown, that an omniscient Being may not know infallibly, what choice a being will make in a case, where it has the perfect liberty of choosing either of the alternatives presented. The fact is, that the simple foreknowledge of God has no influence in producing the event foreknown. It has no relation to the causes, whether physical or moral, by which it is to be produced; but only to the certainty of the event.

But our author proceeds to the assertion (p. 152) “that the purpose of God extends to all events of his administration.” This might be admitted with certain explanations; but to the explanation, which soon follows, (p. 153)—“that God determines *all* his own acts, and *ALL that shall result from them*,” we object, that this is again assuming the whole question at issue, which is, whether or not God does so predetermine all things, that are to take place. It may be admitted without hesitation as to the first part of the sentence, *as relates to his own*

acts, properly so called ; but as to *all*, that shall result from them,—the very question between us is, whether they are or are not predetermined.

So far as respects the material world, and the physical laws by which it is governed, the result of every act of the Deity, following by a physical necessity from the act itself, may be considered as involved in it, and the particular result may be considered as predetermined in the act, of which it is the result. But, with respect to the whole moral system, the case, we think, is essentially different. The purpose of God here, we contend, is different. It is not a purpose, that beings endowed with certain moral powers shall perform certain specific acts ; but that they shall be exposed to certain influences, to the operation of certain motives, and that certain consequences shall follow the choice, they shall freely make, and the course, they shall freely pursue. It is not, that Peter or Judas shall actually make *this* choice, pursue *this* course, and be *thus* rewarded or punished ; but thus, Peter shall have the power of choosing and pursuing this or the opposite course ; and according as he shall pursue the one or the other, *he* shall be rewarded or punished. How he will in fact conduct himself in the alternative may be perfectly known to him, who has access to the human heart ; but the particular result foreknown, was not a subject of predetermination ; that is, it was predetermined that the being in question should act freely and be dealt with accordingly ;

not that it should perform the specific act, which it did perform.

This distinction, it seems to me, is recognized more clearly and certainly, than almost any other, throughout the bible. What else is meant in all the commands, intreaties, exhortations, expostulations, alternatives proposed to us? What else, when we are so often and constantly told,—this do and live, that and die,—that *if* we are obedient, such will be the consequence,—if disobedient, the contrary? What else is implied, when the sinner is reproached with the choice he has made,—but that it was in his power to have chosen otherwise than he did; when he is charged with having brought upon himself the ruin, which has come upon him; but that he might have avoided it by a different course? Especially, what else could be intended, when we are told, that if the inhabitants of ancient Sodom had enjoyed the advantages, which were rejected by the Jews in the time of our Saviour, they would have repented; and in those contingent predictions, when the event foretold is suspended on the contingency of another event; and that not happening, the predicted event did not take place? As in the case of David and the men of Keilah, Jonah and the inhabitants of Nineveh.

The author proceeds (p. 154) from the consideration of what is applicable to the general doctrine of predestination, to what relates particularly to that of personal election. The reasoning is, “God does in fact save a certain definite number of individuals, who will appear at the right hand of God at the

judgment day. As his purpose must agree with what he actually does, he must have designed to save that same definite number of individuals." Here again, as before, we must distinguish between the proper act of God, and that of his creatures. To save men, or to confer upon them the rewards of a future life, is the act of God; and the definite number of individuals, whom he does thus save, he undoubtedly designed to save. But that conduct of moral beings, by which they become the proper subjects of this salvation, is not his act, and not predetermined by him. It is the object of his foreknowledge, and upon that foreknowledge is grounded his determination respecting their salvation. But this foreknowledge has no influence in producing the course of conduct thus foreknown; and their salvation is to be attributed not to an arbitrary purpose and appointment of the Deity, but to their own free acts.

It is correctly said, (p. 155) "If we take care first to learn from scripture and observation what God actually does, and in what manner he does it, we can have no difficulty in passing from this to a correct and satisfactory view of his purposes." Yet are we in great danger of passing to a wrong conclusion, from not distinguishing correctly, what are the *proper acts of God*, and what are the *acts of his creatures*. And in proceeding, I shall show, how this is actually done by the orthodox, by attributing to God those actions of men, upon which their salvation depends. For our author proceeds to say, (p. 157) "that salvation may denote the

regeneration, or first conversion of sinners ;” and this is wholly the act of God. Man has no choice, and no agency in it. “Whenever God makes men holy, he must do it without regard to any goodness in them,” (p. 158.) The first formation of a holy character, “or the commencement of real goodness in the heart, is *wholly unconditional*.” “It seems perfectly clear, that God did not determine to regenerate men or make them holy from any foresight of repentance, faith, or good works, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto.” And finally this unconditional grant of regenerating grace, “is distinguishing, i. e. it is so dispensed, that of those equally unworthy of favor, and equally deserving of punishment, some are renewed, and others not.”

After this account of the purpose of God in election, and the manner in which that purpose is executed, we are not a little struck with the defence of its justice, which follows. It is justified upon the ground, that *no wrong is done to those, who are passed by, though others equally guilty and undeserving are taken from among them, and by special grace are made holy and saved, while they are left to remain in sin, and perish*. There might be some weight in this defence upon some other hypothesis, as to the ground of their guilt and ill desert. But none upon the orthodox hypothesis. It might be urged with a semblance of justice, were the sinfulness in question their own act, and not the act of God ; their condition, one into which they had brought themselves,

and not one in which they were placed by their Maker ; and were the common grace granted to all sufficient to render it possible for them to become holy and thus be saved. But the reverse of all this, the orthodox faith teaches. They are, as they came from the hand of the Creator, totally depraved, inclined only to evil, and incapable of any good, till renewed by the irresistible influence of the spirit of God ; and that influence is withheld from them. Besides this, their everlasting doom was appointed irreversibly before they were brought into being. “ For (p. 152) the purpose of God extends to all events in his administration.” It extends then to the continued sinfulness and final loss of those, who perish, in the same sense, as it does to the renewal to holiness and final salvation of those who are saved. If God makes men holy, in such a manner, that the act is wholly his, it must be wholly his act, that they are left in a state of unholiness ; and if it is perfectly clear, that “ God did not determine to regenerate men, or make them holy from any foresight of repentance and good works, it must be equally certain, that he did not appoint the unregenerate to perish in their sins, from any foresight of their impenitence and sins.” You will judge then, with what propriety our author could deny the charge urged against the orthodox system, (p. 162) “ as representing, that God appoints men to everlasting misery without any regard to their conduct ;” by saying, “ it is a thing as far from our belief as Atheism.” The inconsistency of saying in one sentence, that they

are ordained to wrath *for their sins*, and because they have been workers of iniquity ; and in another, that the elect are chosen without any foresight of faith or good works, as conditions or causes moving to the choice ; and that no others but the elect are redeemed, sanctified and saved, is not the less real, nor the less obvious for having been stated by the Westminster divines.

But the justice of making an arbitrary distinction, where the desert is equal, is defended on another ground. It is said (p. 159,) “ If it be unjust, it cannot be admitted that God would do it in a single instance. But it has been made in some extraordinary instances, as in that of Paul and Mary Magdalene.” But it is denied that these are cases in point. We have not a particle of evidence, that either of them was converted from sin to holiness by an irresistible, and an irrelative influence. The former was converted by a miracle to the christian faith, but not by a miracle to the christian character. He might or might not still have remained a wicked man. His not remaining so was to be attributed to the moral influences of christianity upon his life, not to an irresistible influence of God upon his heart. Notwithstanding all that was miraculous in his conversion, but for this moral influence of the gospel upon his heart, he might have been found at last among those, who, in the great day, could make the appeal, “ Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out demons, and done wonderful works ? ”—but to whom it will yet be said, “ I know

you not ; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.” In the latter case, still less reason is there to imagine any distinguishing grace in a conversion from sin to holiness. Mary Magdalene had been the subject of a distinguished miracle, and became afterward a pious and faithful follower of Jesus, and persevered in her fidelity to the end. But we have no intimation, that the miracle was the direct and immediate cause of her subsequent piety, much less, that it was accompanied with an irresistible influence upon her mind. The probability is, that it was the occasion of her future good life, by bringing her to the knowledge of the Saviour and an attendance upon his instruction, which yet she might have attended, as many others did, without receiving from it the impression, influences, and direction of the conduct of life, which she did.

In my Letters I had said (p. 64,) “that in the appointment of men to privileges, means, and external condition, God has exercised an absolute sovereignty.” This, Dr. Woods thinks, is attended with as formidable difficulties, as the orthodox doctrine, because the whole value of these consists in their influence on character. The design of superior advantages is to give opportunity for higher attainments, than could be reached with those that were inferior. If privileges are granted to some, in distinction from others, which are designed to produce, and do in fact to a certain extent produce, a sanctifying influence upon their character ; where, it is asked, is the difference, as to the general dif-

ficulty, between this, and the direct and immediate appointment to holiness itself?

The answer, I think, is clear and decisive, that the difference is the greatest possible; the one being entirely consistent, the other utterly inconsistent, with moral accountability. The difficulty on our side would be indeed insurmountable, if privileges and means produced their effects by an irresistible influence, and attained their object by a necessary tendency; and that holiness, which is connected with salvation, could not be attained without them. But according to our system (and in this point it is certainly supported by all our experience and observation) holiness, and of course final salvation, is not exclusively the result of any particular privileges and means; but depends wholly on the use and improvement of means. It is not the number of talents, whether one, or ten, or ten thousand, but the degree of fidelity with which they have been employed. Higher privileges give opportunity for higher attainments; at the same time, they involve higher duties and increase responsibility. He who possesses them may rise higher, or he may sink lower, in consequence of the distinction, according as he shall improve or neglect his advantages. On the other hand, the lowest grade of moral advantage does not place its possessor below the notice of his Maker, nor beyond the reach of his mercy, and the possibility of attaining that holiness, which is connected with salvation. The christian, in an enlightened country and age, has undoubtedly cause to be grateful for the advanta-

ges, religious and moral, by which he is distinguished from the ignorant and degraded savage in a pagan country. But the latter, we contend, upon our principles, has no reasonable ground of complaint; since his acceptance or rejection by his Maker and final Judge will be grounded, not upon his positive attainments, but upon the degree of fidelity, with which he shall have improved his opportunities. He will be judged by that rule of equity, according to which, "much is required of him, who has received much," and less of him, who has received little. Connected with this principle, upon which the final judgment is to proceed, the moral difficulty, we think, arising from the variety there is in the allotment of privileges, means, and external condition, however arbitrary it may be, if not wholly removed, bears no resemblance and no proportion to that, which arises from the orthodox doctrine, that of an absolute and unconditional appointment, not to means, by which holiness and happiness may or may not be attained; but to holiness itself and consequent salvation, on the one hand, and, on the other, to having it withheld, and the impossibility of attaining that salvation, for which it is the qualification, and of which it is the condition.

Dr. Woods seems wholly to overlook the real efficacy of privileges and means, and not to distinguish them from the ends, to produce which they have a tendency. His argument proceeds upon the assumption, which is contradicted by all experience, that the actual attainments of men are

exactly, as their privileges and means ; that men are holy in proportion to their advantages for becoming holy ; that every person living in a christian land, and enjoying the light and institutions of the gospel, has of course the christian character ; and that he, who has not those external advantages, cannot possibly have true holiness, and is cut off from the possibility of securing the favor of heaven. He indeed surprises us with the assertion, (p. 166) “ that the previous determination to give men the christian revelation is, in effect, a determination to make them holy.” Also, “ that the truths and precepts, and promises of scripture are the *only medicines* which can cure the moral diseases of men ;” so that, “ to withhold the scriptures is to leave men to the fatal influence of those moral diseases, thus rendered *incurable*.” In these sentences, our author has distinctly expressed, what the whole of his argument required, that all who have the light of the gospel are made holy by it, and saved ; and that all, from whom its light is withheld, must remain in sin, and are left to perish. Nor can we perceive, that one, who receives the orthodox doctrine of election, need to feel any reluctance at this, as a part of it. There is no more difficulty in fixing upon that division of the human race, which is made by the circumstance of enjoying, or not enjoying, the light of the gospel, than upon any other.

But this opinion, though expressed so distinctly in the sentences quoted, seems to be held with some degree of doubt and reservation. For in the pre-

ceding sentence, in each case, that is expressed with limitation, to which afterwards a universal expression is applied. It is first said, that revelation contributes, *in many cases effectually*, to the formation of a holy character; implying, contrary to what the next sentence asserts, that it may not be effectual in all cases. So also, to “withhold the sacred oracles and other means of religion, is to leave men without *any reasonable prospect* of being brought to repentance; not cutting off, as the next sentence does, its possibility, and harshly pronouncing the moral diseases, under the influence of which they are left by this dereliction, absolutely *fatal* and *incurable*. The occurrence of two such striking instances of inconsistency in the compass of four short sentences, in a writer usually so guarded and careful, is a remarkable example of the vacillation of mind produced by the conflicting struggles, of sound sense, and correct moral feelings, with an article of faith, with which they are at variance.

In the following page (p. 167,) an instance occurs, not very dissimilar, of an attempt to fasten upon the author of the Letters to Trinitarians and Calvinists an inconsistency, in admitting the absolute sovereignty of God in the grant of privileges and means, and denying, that the same sovereignty is exercised, in appointing men to holiness, and in fixing their final condition; since it is said, *these are inseparably connected*. “Means are given for the very purpose of producing an effect on character, and character thus formed, determines the condition of men in the future world.” The con-

nected series stands thus,—“means of moral culture, formation of character, condition in the future world. Condition in the future world depends on character; character on the enjoyment of means; and the enjoyment of means, confessedly on the absolute sovereignty of God.” It must be confessed this sentence stands, at first sight, very logically, and has a very imposing aspect. But the reader, who recollects so much of his logic, as that a particular, and even a general proposition is not quite broad enough to support a universal conclusion, will demur at the reasoning, and require, in order to admit the conclusion, what I am apprehensive it will not be found very easy to produce, the proof, that character is *always* in fact exactly answerable to means; that men are actually holy in proportion as they have the means of being holy; and that there is no difference in the fidelity with which they make use of the means they enjoy. When Dr. Woods shall recur to a point, which he seems so singularly to have overlooked, he will be able himself to answer the question, which he asks with so much apparent surprise, why I object to the notion of the “appointment of God relating either to men’s character or to their future condition, while I admit that it relates to privileges and means.”

The objection which lies against a large proportion of the reasoning in the chapter under consideration is, that it confounds the doctrine of particular election, with that of philosophical necessity, as if they must stand or fall together; whereas no

two opinions are more entirely distinct and independent of each other. Philosophical necessity is common to the Calvinism of Edwards, the Unitarianism of Priestley, the Scepticism of Hume, and the Atheism (if it may be properly so denominated) of Hobbes and of Godwin. I have chosen to state my objection to the orthodox doctrine of election, and to defend that objection, upon the ground of moral freedom, as distinguished from philosophical necessity, because I believe it to be the truth, notwithstanding the metaphysical objection that lies against it; which I think is of less force, than the moral objection to the opposite scheme; but whether I have succeeded or not in that point, the question of particular personal election is not affected. The doctrine of philosophical necessity may be true, and yet that of personal election, as maintained by the orthodox, be without foundation.

I am not insensible, as I have before intimated, that the doctrine of moral freedom, as opposed to philosophical necessity, is attended with a metaphysical difficulty, a difficulty, which I do not expect to remove to the entire satisfaction of those, whose minds are turned more to metaphysical, than to moral speculations; and as my controversy with Dr. Woods relates to the Calvinistic doctrine of election, and has no necessary connexion with that of philosophical necessity, my design in this pamphlet does not require me to say any thing more, than what you find in Letter VII, and the preceding part of this, on the subject. To the brief statements which I have there given of the grounds

upon which my opinion on the subject rests, I refer you as furnishing the answer I would give to a large proportion of the reasoning in this chapter. Wishing not to swell this pamphlet unnecessarily by repeating the arguments which were there used, I will satisfy myself with this general reference, and a few further remarks upon some particular passages.

I trust there are few, if any of my readers, who can have so wholly misunderstood the force and design of the passages of my Letters, which are noticed by Dr. Woods (pp. 171—173) as the remarks of Dr. Woods imply that he has done. I wish you to read the pages referred to by him, and see if you find any thing to justify the following singular remark. “The position of our opponents, if well examined, will evidently amount to this,—that *God’s determining* that men shall act from motives, *hinders* them from acting in this manner; that his determining that men shall be moral, accountable agents, makes it impossible they should be so. Whereas we have been very much inclined to think, that God’s determination, if it has any influence, must tend to *accomplish* the thing determined, not to prevent it.” I believe no intelligent reader will doubt, that we are as much *inclined*, as Dr. Woods, to think, that God’s determination must not only *tend to accomplish*, but *must certainly accomplish* the thing determined. And I presume that no reader, except Dr. Woods, has failed to perceive, that the whole of our reasoning is founded upon the supposition of the certain con-

nexion between the determination of God and the event ; that his purpose cannot be frustrated, his decree cannot fail. The question between us relates to the fact, whether certain things are subjects of the divine decree, not whether, being decreed, they will or will not take place.

Now my reasons for saying, that the orthodox doctrine of election is inconsistent with *all those passages of scripture, which imply the influence of motives*, reasons which I thought were sufficiently clear and intelligible before, may be stated more largely thus :—

When it is said, that to address motives of conduct to a person implies, that he is capable of being influenced by motives, the meaning is, not only that he is so constituted, as to act under the influence of motives ; but that when different motives of conduct are presented before him, he has the power of choosing, by which of them his conduct shall be governed. He can choose, for example, between following the impulse of passion, on the one hand, and the suggestions of reason, or the motives presented by the word of God, on the other. Now according to the orthodox doctrine, men act indeed under the influence of motives, but not freely ; since what particular motive shall govern each action of life is a matter of absolute and irreversible appointment. In no case then can any motive addressed to the sinner, influence his conduct, but that, which it was determined from eternity, should influence it. I ask then, whether God's determining that the sinner shall act from a

particular motive does not *hinder* him from acting from all other motives,—does not render it impossible for him to be influenced by any other motives, and does not make it inconsistent with sincerity in the author of his being, to urge other motives upon him, to press him with inducements to holiness, which he has determined shall not prevail; to complain that they do not prevail, and to solicit him by *promises, threatenings, warnings, admonitions, exhortations, and entreaties*, to do that, which he had determined from the first he never should do; to do that, which he had no ability to do without *a mighty influence* from himself, which he was always determined not to grant him?

Nor am I able to perceive, how the instances of Pharaoh and the murderers of our Lord (p. 172) furnish any real support to the argument. If the actions of those men, as is repeatedly asserted in this and the following page, were *free and voluntary*; if they acted as *free moral agents*; if they were *capable of being influenced by motives* in such a manner, *that promises, threats, warnings, &c. were proper and useful*, as Dr. Woods asserts, then their actions were *predetermined* in no other sense, than any unitarian will readily admit. That God has purposes to accomplish, that he employs human agents in accomplishing them, that he employs the sinful actions of wicked men in effecting the most important ends in his moral government, makes a part of the unitarian faith. The treachery of Judas and the malice of the Jewish priests were employed in bringing about the crucifixion of our Lord, and

thus accomplishing what *the counsel of the Lord before determined to be done*. Now in this, and, in all similar cases, we say, God did not predestine these men to that wickedness of heart and character, which led to this act; but he determined to employ that wickedness, in which they were free and voluntary agents, in accomplishing his purpose. And this, as far as I can see, and nothing more, must be the meaning of Dr. Woods; and if it be so, you will perceive it comes short of giving any support to the orthodox doctrine.

He speaks of them as *voluntary and free*.

A man imprisoned and in chains is not *free*. It is not in his power either to leave the prison or remain, as he chooses. He has no freedom of choice with respect to departing or staying in his present situation. Yet his act of remaining may be perfectly *voluntary*; that is, he may remain willingly. He may prefer to remain, though he had the power of leaving the place. A man may then act *voluntarily*, though he cannot act *freely*, under a physical necessity. The same distinction between *free* and *voluntary* action may exist, where there is no reference to physical restraint. The sinner acts *voluntarily*, but not *freely*, if the orthodox doctrines of depravity and election be true. But in the present case, there can be no reference to *physical* freedom or necessity. The subject relates only to *moral action*. The meaning then must be, if the meaning comports with what the words properly express, that they act with *moral freedom*. But the moral freedom of an action consists in its being performed by one,

who had the power of choosing the action or not. If he had the power only of choosing the action, but not of refusing it; he acted from *moral necessity*. If he chose what he had the power to choose or not to choose, he acted with *moral freedom*.

It is asserted again, that they were *free moral agents*. The very use of this phrase shows, that there was in Dr. Woods' mind the distinction which I have made. That there is a distinction between a *free moral agent* and a *necessary moral agent*.^{*} Else why does he add the term *free*? And it is observable that his assertion is, that the murderers of our Lord were *free moral agents*. There was then no such absolute predetermination of their actions and volitions, as to render them *morally necessary*; but they were performed with *moral freedom*.

But the whole of this receives strong confirmation by the decisive expressions which follow. It is asserted, that "they were *capable of being influenced by motives*, in such a manner, *that promises, threats, warnings, &c. were proper and useful*."

Now, when we say a man is capable of being influenced by motives, as I have before observed, we mean, that he is capable of judging and choosing between the motives upon both sides, which relate to a particular action, a course of life, or actions in general. We can with no propriety say,

^{*} Dr. Woods will not misunderstand me as admitting by this, that there can be any such thing, as a *necessary moral agent*. Moral agency implies freedom, as it implies that the being of whom it is predicated is accountable for his actions, and he only can be accountable for his actions, who is free.

that *he* is capable of being influenced by motives, who is absolutely bound by necessity or a previous decree to be governed by the motives on one side, whatever motives may be presented on the other. He acts indeed under the influence of motives, and voluntarily; but he acts not freely, because he is not *capable of being influenced by any other motives*, which may be offered in opposition to them, however high and strong, however clearly stated, and however tenderly urged. But it is further said, he is capable of being influenced in such a manner, that *promises, threats, warnings, &c. were proper and useful*. But promises &c. are *proper* to be urged only upon those, who are capable of being influenced by the motive thus offered, and they can be *useful* only to such. It is certainly something more than absurd, it is mockery for that Being to urge upon sinners all the motives to holiness, that consist in promises, threats, exhortations and warnings, who, having an absolute and entire control over them, has previously determined that none of those motives shall prevail; and who has by the constitution of their nature and his eternal decree, made it impossible for any other motives to prevail, but those which lead to sin.

If any of the sinful actions of wicked men, by which they accomplish the purposes of heaven, are performed in pursuance of a decree, or under a necessity, which takes from them the liberty of which I speak; with respect to those actions, though they may be *voluntary* in performing them,

yet not being *free*, they cannot be morally accountable. They incur no just blame, and are not deserving of punishment.

I think it unnecessary to notice in detail all the reasoning that follows in the remainder of this chapter. The single remark, before made, which is sufficient to invalidate its whole force, is, that Dr. Woods proceeds all along upon the idea, that the orthodox doctrine of election is the same, as that of philosophical necessity ; and all his conclusions, as I have before shown, depend upon its being so. All depends upon its being a fact, that it is by the influence of the promises, exhortations, warnings, and other means of religion, that men are made holy ; whereas, if the doctrines of total depravity, and personal election be true, the means of religion can produce no such effects. Whatever means are employed, they can produce no effect. No expostulations, no warnings, no hopes or fears addressed to sinners can have the smallest tendency to renew and sanctify them. Nothing but that mighty influence, which is imparted to the elect, and to them only, can produce holiness. And in those, to whom it is imparted, it cannot fail to produce it. The hopes and fears, the exhortations and warnings of religion can have no influence upon the non-elect ; and the elect, though no such means were used, will certainly be regenerated, made holy, and be saved by that mighty influence, which is independent alike of all human efforts, and all external means.

With respect to the argument to be drawn from several passages of scripture, I am willing to leave it without any further remark. By comparing the explanation of those passages, which was given in my former Letters, with what is here urged by Dr. Woods in reply, you will be able to judge, whether they furnish satisfactory proof, that the orthodox doctrine of election is a doctrine of scripture; or whether those few passages of scripture, which are relied on in the argument, admit of a fair interpretation, which will give a meaning, that has no relation to the doctrine; and which is perfectly consistent with the general language and obvious import of the scriptures, in what relates to the duty and destiny of man, as a moral and accountable being.

I have one word only to say more, as to the moral argument upon the question in discussion. The author of the Reply has very naturally confined himself chiefly to metaphysical reasoning. The fallacy of that reasoning, I think, I have shown with a sufficient degree of clearness. The moral considerations, which seem to me to be of irresistible force in opposition to the doctrine, are very obvious, and may be stated in few words; or rather they suggest themselves immediately upon the statement of the doctrine itself.

God is represented by this doctrine, as bringing into being all the descendants of Adam, on account of his sin, with a nature totally corrupt, inclined only to evil, with dispositions and affections wholly wrong, hating him that made them, his laws and

every thing good. It is declared, that men are by nature wholly incapable of any thing morally good, till their nature is changed ; that this change can be effected only by the direct and immediate influence of the spirit of God ; that the sinner can do nothing, which shall be a reason with God for granting this influence. On the contrary, whenever it is granted, it is done in a perfectly arbitrary manner. It is granted only to those, who were elected from eternity, without any reason, but the will of God, for distinguishing them from among others, all of whom were equally undeserving. This election extends to a certain definite portion of mankind ; all the rest, no more undeserving than they, and no more sinful, than they were created, are passed by, and left to hopeless, remediless, everlasting ruin.

I believe that no part of this statement will be objected to as giving an unfair or distorted view of the orthodox faith. But we find it not easy to bring our moral feelings to acquiesce in the doctrine, as it is thus presented. Something more is required than a few detached texts so interpreted, as to express a meaning, that is irreconcilable with the general import and uniform tenor of the scriptures ; fortified by a metaphysical argument of a very subtle and abstruse nature, the force of which has always been a subject of controversy, without any reference to its connexion with a doctrine of religion ; and which, were its force unquestionable, has no necessary connexion with the doctrine of religion, which it is brought to support.

LETTER X.

Atonement. Analogy of God's government in the present life. Civil government. Dr. Woods' objections considered. Moral influence of the two systems. Reasoning in the Letters to Trinitarians &c. incorrectly stated.

UPON the doctrine of the atonement, which comes next under consideration, I wish to call your attention only to a few remarks, suggested by some of the exceptions offered to my statement and defence of my opinions upon this subject in my former Letters.

To what is said (pp. 199, 200) respecting the judgment to be drawn from the analogy of God's government in the present world, as to the efficacy of repentance, the short and satisfactory reply is, that this analogy, had we no other knowledge on the subject, would certainly leave us, as we find it always has left men, unenlightened by divine revelation, in some doubt on the subject. It would leave us in uncertainty whether repentance would be accepted alone, or some expiation be required. That uncertainty and doubt I have shown, revelation has removed, and has taught us, what reason, and our experience of the present operation of the divine government, could not teach—"that if the wicked will turn from his wickedness, he shall live"—that pardon is sure to the sincerely penitent.

And as to the analogy of civil government; there are circumstances of difference in the case, extremely obvious, which are sufficient to invalidate all conclusions drawn by reasoning from the one to the

other. Thus, when we are asked (p. 200) whether human government "holds out to criminals the prospect of pardon, in case they repent, and what would be the consequence of their doing it;" it is sufficient to say, that the reasons why they do not, are such, as do not apply at all to the divine government. It is wholly from the imbecility and imperfection of human government, that it is obliged to inflict the punishment, which has been incurred by guilt, upon him, who, sincerely penitent, has returned to virtue and obedience. At human tribunals, from which the dispositions and purposes of the heart are concealed, where there is no infallible judge to determine, when repentance is sincere, and reformation unfeigned and effectual, it may be impossible to avoid the fatal consequences, that would follow from admitting the principle, of allowing repentance to expiate guilt. But at the tribunal of Him, whose knowledge is perfect, and who can see the whole of the case, there can be no such danger; and "what more dreadful consequences still would follow the admission of such a principle" in the government of a Being, who has no occasion to resort to expedients in his administration, from want of power or defect of knowledge, it is not easy to imagine.

When it is asked again (p. 200) "If the attributes of God demand, that the punishment should not outlive the crime, on what ground are the dispensations of the *present* life to be justified," the reply is grounded on the obvious distinction between the final retributions of the future life, which are

those in question ; and those dispensations of the present, which make part of a state of discipline and trial, and upon which the final retributions are to be grounded. It may be very reasonable and just, that the natural consequences of a course of vice should continue to follow a man in this life, and make a part of the trial of his virtue, after he has sincerely repented, and wholly corrected the habit ; when a principle of the divine administration would be neither reasonable nor just, that should pursue him with those consequences into a state of final and eternal retribution.

Upon the objection (p. 202) to my sense of redemption and sacrifice, I think it sufficient to refer you to the Letter in which it is contained. You will then judge, whether, as I had clearly shown that the term *redemption* was used in the two most important cases of deliverance, to which it was applied in the Old Testament, in a certain sense ; it be not consistent with sound principles of interpretation to suppose, that it was meant to be applied in a similar sense in the New ; and whether, as the most orthodox will not pretend, that the term *sacrifice*, as applied to Christ, is to be understood in its *literal* sense, the account which I have given of its use and meaning be not satisfactory ; and whether the reasons I have assigned be not sufficient to show, that it is used in the sense which I have given it. I am willing also to rest the third objection, (p. 203) relative to the mode of interpretation of several passages of scripture, on the exposition of those texts in my Letter ; reminding you only, that

while unitarians give a distinct and intelligible meaning to those texts, the orthodox in reply, though they deny that meaning to be the true one, and affirm, that "those texts teach the doctrine of the atonement, as it is commonly held ; and that they assert it in language as plain, express and emphatic, as any which can be imagined ;" yet do not tell us, though they have been called upon to do it, what the doctrine is, that they so expressly assert, and plainly teach.

Dr. Woods complains (p. 204) of unitarians putting a forced construction upon scripture, and that there is no likeness between those passages of scripture, which relate to the work of redemption, and the unitarian doctrine, as expressed in my Letters. He has been careful to guard against the possibility of the charge being retorted by putting it out of our power to institute the comparison for the purpose, as to the orthodox doctrine ; not having given us in the present or the former publication any distinct statement of that doctrine.

With what reason, let me ask, can it be said, as the fourth objection states, that the unitarian scheme "takes away the difference, which the scripture uniformly makes between the sufferings of Christ and of his apostles?" Will it follow, because we deny the sufferings of Christ to be properly vicarious, that they were therefore of no more importance, than those of the subordinate agents in accomplishing the purposes of his mission ? We certainly do attribute a value, and importance, and efficacy to the sufferings and death, as well as to every part of the life and char-

acter of the Saviour, which we allow to those of no other person. Instead of believing, as Dr. Woods seems to intimate, (p. 204) that excepting this vicarious suffering, we are at least as much indebted to Paul as to Jesus Christ; we regard the distinction between them as of the utmost importance. Is it no distinction, that one is the Lord and master, the other the servant? That Jesus was the direct and immediate messenger of God to men; to reveal to us his will and his purposes; while Paul was only the ambassador of Jesus, to declare to us the doctrine, in which he had been instructed by him? Is there nothing in the number and splendor of the miracles, by which Jesus proved his peculiar relation to the Father and commission from him to men, to distinguish them from those, by which Paul and the other apostles confirmed the authority, which they professed to derive from Jesus as their master, and head? Jesus taught as one having authority,—an authority derived immediately from the Father; Paul and Peter, and James, and John, as those, who derived their authority and received their doctrine from Jesus.

As to the comparative moral influence of the two systems, it must be judged of by other marks than those, which Dr. Woods has mentioned, and from those marks you will probably doubt, whether his conclusions are correct. Is it “that scheme of atonement, which gives the highest view of the evil of sin, and of the displeasure of God against it,” or that which gives the most just, rational, and scriptural, that “will have the most powerful ten-

dency to lead men to repentance?" Will men be more seriously and practically affected by a system, which so aggravates the guilt of every sin, as to leave no room for degrees of wickedness, and no proportion between sinners, and condemns all to equal degrees of ill desert, and of divine wrath; than by that, which leaves room for different degrees of guilt? (p. 207.) And can it be supposed, that sinners are more likely to be brought to repentance by the thought, that an innocent being has suffered for their sins, instead of the guilty; than that repentance only can secure their pardon, and that repentance only is required by a merciful God? Especially can it be thought, that the "evil of sin and the abhorrence with which God regards it, are better displayed by the punishment of the innocent instead of the guilty, than by granting pardon to the guilty upon their repentance? Nor can I perceive how, by the doctrine of atonement, (p. 208) a "more glorious display was made of the divine love." Was there more love manifested in requiring the punishment of sin, than in freely remitting it to the penitent? In refusing to forgive the penitent, till an innocent person had voluntarily taken the punishment in his stead, than in accepting penitence and future good conduct, as a reason for freely forgiving the past? Is it a less display of the love of God to men, if he effected our salvation by Jesus Christ by making us fit subjects of his favour by his whole ministry on earth, than if he effected the same by inflicting upon him all the punishment, which sinners had deserved?

In p. 214, a fair statement is not given of my reasoning. I should not notice it, as it is in itself of very little consequence, but that every instance of this kind, which the reader does not detect, serves to impair his confidence in the soundness of the writer, and thus to affect the credit of the cause he supports. I am represented as reasoning thus:—"The scriptures *in many places* speak of God as merciful, and ready to forgive the penitent without expressly referring to any atonement; therefore forgiveness rests solely on the mercy of God and the repentance of sinners, and the atonement has nothing to do with it, except as it may be conducive to repentance." Such a conclusion would evidently be unwarranted by the premises, too large for them to support. But the fact is, the representation is not correct, and you find no such reasoning as is stated, and nothing, that a reader of common understanding and tolerable attention could be supposed so to misunderstand, as to believe that it meant, what is attributed to it. I request you, however, to examine the passage referred to; where you will find, that my argument was directed against this assertion of Dr. Woods in his Letters to Unitarians, that "God has told us, that we must *rely upon the atoning blood of his son, as the sole ground of forgiveness*. I challenged Dr. Woods to inform us *where God has told us this*. But he has not done it. I then proceeded, not to state *generally*, as I am represented to have done, "that the scriptures, *in many places*, without any reference to any kind of

atonement, refer the forgiveness of sin solely to the mercy of God ;” but *specifically*, that this is done by Isaiah, by David, by John the Baptist, by our Saviour, and by Peter, in texts, which are quoted. And these quotations you will perceive are made for the purpose of repelling the assertion, “ that the atoning blood of Christ is the *sole* ground of forgiveness.” And you will find it accompanied with no such reasoning as is alleged. No inference is drawn. The language of the sacred writers is left to speak for itself, and the reader is left to draw his own conclusions. The reasoning is not mine, but Dr. Woods’. You will judge, therefore, where the ridicule ought to fall, when he proceeds to show its absurdity, by its application in analogous cases.

LETTER XI.

Divine Influence. Love to Christ. Inconclusive reasoning. What is due from the Orthodox and Unitarians to each other.

IN the concluding Chapter of Dr. Woods’ Reply, I find little occasion for any further remarks. So far as relates to the doctrine of divine influence, I would only recal your attention to the point at issue between us. It is the more necessary, as it is not kept sufficiently in view by Dr. Woods in his Reply. I had stated it very explicitly in the VIth Letter of my former publication; and the correctness of that statement is not called in question. But if, as is virtually admitted, the statement there made is correct, if the orthodox doctrine of divine

influence is,—*that it is confined to the elect—granted to them in a perfectly arbitrary manner—that its effects take place, without any agency or co-operation of theirs, they being wholly passive in it—that it is the irresistible, unaided work of God, which man can do nothing either to assist or prevent—that it is never granted to the non-elect, in consequence of which, they can never be regenerated, and their final salvation is impossible; I ask, with what propriety it can be said, (p. 218) that the divine influence effectually directs and regulates the liberty and activity of those who are saved, and induces them to use their voluntary and moral powers in a right manner? I ask what is the liberty of a being, who is impelled by an irresistible influence, which he can neither assist nor prevent, and what is his activity, who is under an influence which produces its effects, without any agency or cooperation of his, and in which he is wholly passive? I ask also how he can be said to be induced to the right use of his voluntary and moral powers, when he is impelled by an influence, which produces its effects without his agency or cooperation? And with what propriety the use of moral powers can be spoken of, where the agent is declared to be wholly passive?

I think it unnecessary to follow Dr. Woods in his further remarks on this subject. By recurring to the discussion of the subject in my former Letters, you

* I speak of that divine influence which is peculiar to Calvinism, as distinguished from that, which Unitarians admit. For it is with the former only that I have any concern, as it is that only about which there is any controversy.

will be able to perceive how the argument stands, and whether any thing, that has been said in reply, serves to support that *special divine influence in changing the nature of him, who is the subject of it*, which is the only point of controversy. And with respect to the several other topics, which fill up the remaining pages of the Reply, I am satisfied with referring you to the corresponding passages in the last of my former Letters.

You will perceive, I think, without difficulty, the fallacy that runs through the reasoning on page 221. If our love to Christ depends on the nature and value of the benefits we receive from him, will it follow, as Dr. Woods intimates, that we may owe no higher love to God, than to a perfect man? Will Dr. Woods say, that we can have received the same *benefits* from any man, or any finite being, as from God? that we can be as dependant on him? Will it follow also, as is further asserted, that the mother of Jesus, and departed saints are as proper objects of our highest religious affections as the Saviour? Have we received from them the same *benefits*? are they the messengers and instruments of God for conferring upon us as great and important blessings? Besides, you will remark that other terms are introduced with other very different additional meanings. Not only love, but confidence, veneration and worship, we are told, will be due in the same manner to inferior beings, as to the supreme God. You will probably think it follows not very clearly and certainly, that a dependant finite being is entitled to our *worship*, to

our supreme religious worship, because it is the instrument of God in conferring upon us such blessings, as entitle it even to a high degree of *love and gratitude and veneration*. Nor that we can put the *same trust* in a being, all whose power of protecting us or doing us good, is derived; as in that infinite and independent Being, from whom it derives its power. But if Dr. Woods' reasoning is to be relied upon, all this, and more than this, will follow from the single proposition, that our *love* to the Saviour will depend on the nature and value of the benefits we receive from him, and not upon the rank he holds in the scale of being.

I have only a few remarks to make on the subject, which occupies the paragraph preceding that, which closes the book before me; relating to the spirit, disposition, and conduct, which are due from unitarians and trinitarians to each other. In some of the sentiments expressed I cheerfully accord; but I think that Dr. Woods himself can hardly fail to perceive, how utterly inconsistent they are practically, with some others, which are pretty distinctly avowed. I think he will hardly expect, that two great bodies of men, each professing the christian faith, each receiving their doctrines from the same books, and each sincerely believing that the doctrines which they profess are those that are taught in those books; can mutually deny the christian name to each other, withhold from each other all offices of christian communion, and consider each other as idolaters, enemies of truth, and deniers of the Lord; and yet maintain

“uninterrupted, the advantages and pleasures of civil, social, and literary intercourse, the offices of kindness, and the feelings of benevolence.” We have seen for a few years past, and daily see more and more distinctly, what are the effects of an approach to the state, which Dr. Woods seems to contemplate with complacency, as that which ought to take place. The progress toward such a state of separation, and consequent alienation, unitarians contemplate with regret and grief, but without alarm and without anxiety. They have no fears and no doubts respecting the final result. They have been faithful and uniform and constant in their endeavours to avert it. But if it is forced upon them, they are ready to meet the exigence. But they will still not cease from their endeavours, in the spirit of forbearance, gentleness and christian charity, to prevent a schism, in their apprehension so causeless, so unworthy of the professed disciples of Jesus Christ, and so fatal, as they believe it to be, should the efforts of those who attempt it succeed, to the spirit and the interests of the religion of Christ.

We are not insensible, that the difference of opinion upon important points of christian doctrine is great. We probably think it as great, and of as much practical moment, as does the writer of the Reply ; but we think it not sufficient to justify such a separation, as has for several years been openly advocated, and strenuously attempted by some,—we are willing to believe honest, but certainly very violent and indiscreet, orthodox

divines. We believe there is still a foundation of christian faith, which we hold in common, broad enough for all honest men, who have any considerable portion of the christian spirit, to stand together in peace, to worship together, and to hold fellowship in all the ordinances of the gospel. For we believe the proper grounds of this fellowship to consist, not in articles of speculative belief only, or chiefly, but in the temper, spirit, and life of the gospel. This we are confident too is the sentiment and feeling of the great body of orthodox christians, as well as unitarians. Whatever importance they may on either side attach to their particular views of certain distinguishing doctrines, they are yet willing to allow the christian name, and to extend their christian fellowship to all those, who profess the common faith, and manifest their sincerity in it by the spirit of the gospel in their lives. The sentiment intimated by Dr. Woods with sufficient clearness to be intelligible; that trinitarians are considered as idolaters by unitarians; and that the faith, which *they* profess, on the other hand, is regarded by trinitarians as *another gospel*, in such a sense, as to render it *inconsistent with their allegiance to Christ, to have any fellowship with them in the peculiarities of their faith and worship*, we believe is not well founded. Unitarians may believe, as some of them have expressed, that to render *supreme religious worship* to Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, as a person distinct from the Father, is idolatry; and yet may be far from charging trinitarians with being idolaters, who render such worship; because

they have no doubt of their doing it with a pure conscience, and with the full conviction of their minds, that it is what their christian faith and profession require. They think, therefore, that what, considered abstractly, is idolatrous worship, is not so to them, they believing it to be that, which the gospel prescribes. On the other hand, we are unable to imagine what part of the unitarian worship can be offensive to a trinitarian, or that it is possible for a trinitarian to think it inconsistent with his allegiance to Christ to unite in it. That it does not contain all that he thinks it should, is surely no good reason for refusing to join in what it does contain that is pure. The writer of this has had occasion to worship in orthodox assemblies and to attend the ministrations of orthodox divines. He has attended such worship with great satisfaction; very seldom has he known a respectable orthodox minister to introduce any thing into *an act of worship* in which a unitarian could not unite with him. The same, it is believed, is true with respect to unitarian ministers. They never have occasion to introduce any sentiment or language into their acts of worship, in which an orthodox worshipper, who should be present, could not cheerfully join. Very few are found on either side, who think it necessary, so far to depart from the examples of scriptural worship, and violate the decorum due to fellow-worshippers, as to intrude the peculiarities of their faith into their acts of worship, and substitute a creed for a prayer. And as respects the religious instructions of the pulpit, no man, who is

himself a fair inquirer, would be unwilling to hear the reasons which may be offered in support of opinions opposite to his own, as often, as a faithful minister would think it his duty to urge them in his public discourses.

We are as much disposed to *revere conscience* as Dr. Woods can be; but we do not suppose it requires us to separate ourselves from those, who profess the same reverence for conscience, and who give reasonable evidence of their sincerity in it; evidence that it is indeed conscience by which they are guided, and not passion, pride, or party spirit. It is our wish and endeavour also to be *faithful to the truth*. We deem it an important duty. We think that no considerations will justify us in any kind of disguise or concealment, or in withholding any exertions in our power to promote the knowledge of the truth. But we *revere* also the same fidelity to the truth in others; and do not feel ourselves authorized to withdraw from them, because their speculative opinions differ from ours,—because that which is truth to them is not so to us. We think that the agreement in the great principle of the love of truth and sacred regard to it and fidelity in its pursuit, forms a stronger and more reasonable bond of union, than any agreement in opinions could do.

I might make some remarks on what is implied in the last sentence of this paragraph, when it is said, “we request them, (the Unitarians,) to extend to us the same indulgence and candour, and to suffer us, without reproach, to serve God

according to our own consciences." I might ask, whether a disposition has ever been discovered by unitarians, to interfere with the religious rights, or to disturb the consciences of the orthodox, as is here intimated. The insinuation is certainly not very consistent with another charge, with which, till very lately, we have been constantly assailed, viz. that we are indifferent whether truth or error prevail; that we think it of little importance what men believe, and lay no stress even on our own opinions. But each of these representations is equally erroneous.

It is, however, of little importance for Dr. Woods or myself to speak of what is in fact the general spirit and conduct of unitarians and of the orthodox, in relation to each other. The religious community have fortunately the means of judging of it from other sources of information. The spirit that pervades their respective publications; the principles which they defend, the measures they respectively pursue, the language which they think it proper to apply; especially the treatment they bestow upon individuals, where they have the power; these will form the grounds of judgment, and the public judgment, we doubt not, will eventually be correct. When Dr. Woods can refer to the most respectable unitarian writers as declaring, that they do not consider the orthodox as christians, and holding them up to public odium, as preaching another gospel, and denying the Lord that bought them; ranking them in a class with deists and atheists, Jews and Mahometans, and declaring them to be no better

entitled, than either of them, to the name of christians,—and denouncing them, as deists in disguise; when he can point us to associations of unitarian ministers expelling from their body, and withdrawing all ministerial intercourse and christian fellowship from members, of good character and exemplary lives, because they have exchanged unitarian for trinitarian sentiments;—to unitarian churches excommunicating their members for the same reason;—to individual unitarians refusing to have fellowship in christian ordinances in a trinitarian church,—and to the Principals of unitarian theological seminaries, expelling serious and conscientious pupils for the expression of opinions, to which they have been led by honest inquiry, with the harsh declaration that such opinions are not to be tolerated;—when he can tell us of the exertions of unitarian ministers for a course of years to excite alarm in the public mind, to raise opposition against the orthodox, and to destroy the influence and usefulness of orthodox ministers, and to excite in others a fear to allow themselves in free religious inquiry, lest they should find themselves obliged to adopt orthodox views and thus expose themselves to the loss of reputation, of usefulness, and of the christian name,—to excommunication, and all the civil and social inconveniences which bigotry and violence have it in their power to inflict in an enlightened age and under a free government; when he can do this, he may, with some reason, appeal, in behalf of his injured brethren, not to our *candour and indulgence only*, but to our sense of

decency and justice, and “request, that he and his friends may be suffered without reproach,” and without being subjected to still more serious evils than reproaches, “to serve God according to their own consciences.”*

It was not my intention to notice any other instances, in which Dr. Woods has found a meaning in my words different from what I presume readers in general discovered; but the last paragraph of his Reply contains one, which is of such a nature, that I am unwilling it should pass unnoticed. He quotes me as saying, not only that the moral influence of the unitarian doctrine is far more certain, and powerful, and salutary, and purifying than the influence of orthodoxy, (which is not correctly stated, as the reference is to a single doctrine only and not to the whole scheme); *but that the virtue of unitarians is of a more pure, generous, and elevated kind, than that of their opponents.* You will probably be a little surprised, on turning to the passage referred to, to find that the words I actually made use of, instead of those just cited, were the following: *The virtue that is produced by cheerful views, and by the contemplation of kindness, benevolence, and mercy in God, is of a more pure,*

* In connexion with the paragraph above, the reader is invited to turn to the files of the Panoplist for a few of the last years of its publication, to the discourse of the Rev. Lyman Beecher at the ordination in Park street, to Dr. Spring's *Tribute to New England*, to Dr. Mason's farwell sermon, to Dr. Miller's Letters on unitarianism, to the Letter of Dr. Mason to Mr. Dewey on his expulsion from the Theological Seminary at New York, to the transactions of councils and consociations at Coventry, Deerfield, Brooklyn and Wareham, and of associations in the vicinities of Weymouth, Hadley, Deerfield, Pelham, Charlemont, &c.

generous, and elevated kind, than that which arises from cold, austere, and gloomy views, and the contemplation of severe, unrelenting, vindictive justice, and the execution of eternal wrath. After quoting me in the manner stated, he adds, *I cannot bring myself to contest this last point with unitarians.* Had I used the words which he has represented me as using, the censure implied in thus declining the contest would have fallen with some force. As it is, the reader will judge of its force.

In the discussions, which I have now brought to a close, as in my former Letters, it has been my wish and endeavour to give a correct view of the religious opinions maintained by myself, as I suppose, in common with unitarians generally, upon the several subjects which have been brought into view; and of the mode of reasoning by which those opinions are to be defended.

It has been also my faithful endeavour to do justice to the highly respected author of the Reply to those Letters, in the notice which I have had occasion to take of his book. The remarks, which I have thought myself obliged to make, have in some cases not been such as I could have wished to find a place for. Whether they are fair and just is submitted to the judgment of the reader. I shall extremely regret the circumstance, if any of them shall appear to have been made under a misapprehension of the meaning of the writer, or are of such a nature as to give a false impression; and shall be grateful to him, who will correct the error, and remove the wrong impression.

Having now completed my design in these Letters, I take my leave of those whom I address, and of the subject, with the devout prayer to the Author of light and of love, that the labours which have been employed on both sides may not be fruitless. And if they shall serve in any degree to give to readers on each side of the controversy more distinct and satisfactory views upon the subjects to which they relate, and a clearer understanding of the reasons upon which they are grounded; some benefit will be derived to the cause of christian truth; and in proportion as the views of christians are enlarged and rendered more clear and distinct by discussions conducted with seriousness, and with a spirit of moderation; it is to be hoped, that better feelings will prevail, and christian charity be promoted; and that christians, instead of being driven asunder by differences of opinion inseparable from a state of imperfect knowledge, will allow themselves to be drawn together by the kind spirit of the gospel, which is common to true christians of all sects, and of every denomination.

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